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ABSTRACT

THE ORIGIN, DEVELOPMENT, AND HISTORY OF THE
NORWEGIAN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
FROM THE 1840s TO 1887

by

Bjorgvin Martin Hjelvik Snorrason

Adviser: Jerry Moon

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: THE ORIGIN, DEVELOPMENT, AND HISTORY OF THE NORWEGIAN
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH FROM THE 1840s TO 1887

Name of researcher: Bjorgvin Martin Hjelvik Snorrason

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Date completed: July 2010

This dissertation reconstructs chronologically the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway from the Haugian Pietist revival in the early 1800s to the establishment of the first Seventh-day Adventist Conference in Norway in 1887.

The present study has been based as far as possible on primary sources such as protocols, letters, legal documents, and articles in journals, magazines, and newspapers from the nineteenth century. A contextual-comparative approach was employed to evaluate the objectivity of a given source. Secondary sources have also been consulted

for interpretation and as corroborating evidence, especially when no primary sources were available.

The study concludes that the Pietist revival ignited by the Norwegian Lutheran lay preacher, Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771-1824), represented the culmination of the sixteenth-

century Reformation in Norway, and the forerunner of the Adventist movement in that country. Thus Adventism in Norway was a direct outgrowth of Norwegian Pietism.

Adventism was essentially pietistic in its emphasis on the Bible only as the rule of faith, and its insistence that biblical doctrine must be not only believed, but practiced in the life.

The best evidence suggests that the discovery of the seventh-day Sabbath by four families of southern Norway, who became the nucleus of Norwegian Adventism, did not result from any contact with other Sabbath keepers, but was derived directly from their own study of the Bible, and their faith in the Bible as the binding word of God as advocated by Hans Nielsen Hauge.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

THE ORIGIN, DEVELOPMENT, AND HISTORY OF THE
NORWEGIAN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
FROM THE 1840s TO 1887

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Bjorgvin Martin Hjelvik Snorrason

July 2010

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To my wife
Hallgerður Ásta
the love of my life

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------------|--|
| <i>AT</i> | <i>Advent Tidende</i> (Adventist Tidings) |
| <i>BC</i> | <i>SDA Bible Commentary</i> |
| CAR | Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI |
| GCA | General Conference Archives, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Springs, MD |
| <i>GV</i> | <i>Gospel Viking</i> , by Adriel D. Chilson |
| <i>GW</i> | <i>Gospel Workers</i> , by Ellen G. White |
| HASDA | Historical Archive for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Oslo, Norway |
| HR-LLU | Heritage Room and White Estate Branch Office, Del Webb Library, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, CA |
| <i>HS</i> | <i>Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists</i> |
| <i>LS</i> | <i>Life Sketches of Ellen G. White</i> |
| <i>ML</i> | <i>Mattesons Liv</i> , by John G. Matteson |
| Ms | Manuscript |
| <i>RH</i> | <i>Review and Herald; Advent Review and Sabbath Herald</i> |
| RLC | The Royal Library in Copenhagen, Fiolstræde 1, DK-1016 København K, Denmark |
| SDA | Seventh-day Adventist |
| <i>SDAE</i> | <i>Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia</i> |
| <i>SG</i> | <i>Spiritual Gifts</i> , by Ellen G. White |
| <i>2SM</i> | <i>Selected Messages</i> , Book 2, by Ellen G. White |
| UOL | Universitetsbiblioteket i Oslo (University of Oslo Library) |

IT *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, by Ellen G. White

TT *Tidernes Tegn* (Signs of the Times)

YI *Youth's Instructor*

PREFACE

This dissertation investigates the origin of the Second Advent Movement in Norway during the second half of the nineteenth century, culminating in the establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway.

Background of the Problem

Historic Christianity began with Jesus Christ, who took the first step in the organization of the church when He ordained twelve to carry on His work after His departure. The name “Christian” was originally applied to the followers of Christ by outsiders at Antioch, ca. A.D. 40-44. According to the letter of the Apostle Paul to the Romans (1:16), the process of Christianization began with the Jews before going to the gentiles. Therefore, Jerusalem was the first center of the Christian Church. Gradually other centers were established, such as Antioch, Edessa, Alexandria, and Rome. Alexandria and Rome represented the Greek and Latin branches of Christianity, while Antioch and Edessa represented the Syrian and Celtic Churches.¹

The Rise of Divergent Forms of Christianity

Soon different understandings of Christianity emerged within these branches. The churches of Antioch and Edessa accepted the Bible as the final and binding revelation of God regarding doctrine and ethics, while those of Rome and Alexandria showed a greater

¹The Coptic Church, the Armenian Church, and the churches east of Edessa are not referred to here since they are geographically beyond the scope of this dissertation.

tendency to interpret Scripture through lenses of philosophy, mysticism, and allegory. Concerning this fundamental difference, the historian Albert Henry Newman stated clearly and briefly: “In the great Christological controversies of the fourth and following centuries Alexandria and Antioch were always antagonists; Alexandria representing mystical transcendentalism and promoting allegorical interpretation; Antioch insisting on the grammatico-historical interpretation of Scriptures, and having no sympathy with mystical modes of thought.”²

Although the first four ecumenical councils³ had declared all bishops of the different centers of Christianity to be equal, according to the Cyprian idea of episcopacy, Justinian declared the bishop of Rome to be “the head of all the holy churches” in 533. At the same time his Code of Justinian gave canon law the same authority as civil law (529-534). He also liberated North Africa from the Arian Vandals in 534, and Rome from the Arian Goths in 538, thus securing for the bishop of Rome the needed independence to exercise his claim of universal jurisdiction over all Christianity. Gibbon said that after Justinian had abolished the “temporal and spiritual tyranny of the Vandals, he proceeded without delay to the full establishment of the catholic church”⁴ which was achieved in

²Albert Henry Newman, *A Manual of Church History*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Pub. Society, 1933), 1:297; see also Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark: 1963), 97.

³The Council of Nicea in 325, the Council of Constantinople in 381, the Council of Ephesus in 431, and the Council of Chalcedon in 451 are the first four ecumenical councils.

⁴Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 8 vols. (London: Folio Society, 1996), 5:124.

538 when Justinian's soldiers "dug the grave of the Goth monarchy."⁵ Thus by the early sixth century, the Roman Church had "reached full development,"⁶ i.e., had become firmly established and widely accepted as the dominant branch of Christianity. However, it was the Celtic branch of the church that first Christianized Norway.

The Celtic Church

The history of the Celtic Church was very different from the Roman Catholic Church, both theologically and politically, because of the Celtic stand on the Bible alone as the word of God. By the time of the apostle Paul, the Celts⁷ had settled throughout Europe and Anatolia, or from Spain in the West to Asia Minor in the East, and to the British Isles in the North. To the Romans, the Continental Celts were known as Galli, or Gauls; those in the British Isles were called Britanni, and in Asia Minor they were known as Galatians by the Greeks at the time of Paul. Thus Celtic Christianity began in the first century with the mission of Paul to the Galatians, and may have spread rapidly from Galatia to other ethnic Celts in Europe and the British Isles, although little is known exactly about how early Christianity arrived in the British Isles.⁸

Although there are no known documents concerning Christianity in the British Isles before Patrick (c. 388–c. 461), it is well known that his father was a deacon and his

⁵Thomas Hodgkin, *Italy and Her Invaders*, 2d ed., 8 vol. in 9 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885-1899), 4:250.

⁶J. D. Douglas, ed., *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, vol. 2 (Auckland: InterVarsity Press, Tyndale House Publishing, 1980), 827.

⁷The word *Celt* is derived from *Keltoi*, the name given to these people by Herodotus and other Greek writers.

⁸*GC*, 62.

grandfather was an ordained presbyter or bishop from 325. According to Patrick's *Confession* and *Letter*, the pre-Hieronymian Bible or the Old Latin (also called Itala) was the sole foundation of his study, faith, and practice. The same is true of Gildas the Briton (d. 570), Columba (521-597), Columbanus (543-615), and the Celtic Christians for centuries. This is even acknowledged by the Venerable Bede (673?-735), the English Benedictine monk and scholar.

Pope Gregory I (reigned 590-604) sent Augustine of Canterbury in 596-597 (d. 604 or 605) to convert the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity. King Ethelbert received Augustine and his 40 monks in Kent. On June 2, 597, Ethelbert was baptized with the encouragement of his Roman Catholic wife, Bertha. Thereafter the new faith spread rapidly among the Anglo-Saxons. About 603 Augustine tried, unsuccessfully, to unite the Celtic and Roman churches under one authority, liturgy, faith, and practice. When he did not succeed in winning the Celts by persuasion, he threatened to do so by the sword. Soon Augustine, with the help of the Anglo-Saxons, began war on the Celtic Christians in Wales. About 1,200 Celts lost their lives. Then section by section the Celtic Church was absorbed by the Roman Catholic Church. The Celtic Church in Southern Ireland merged with the Roman Catholic Church in 632. The Celtic Church in Northumbria, through its king and leaders, conformed to Roman usages at the Synod of Whitby in 664, Northern Ireland in 695, the headquarters of the Celtic Christians of Scotland at Iona in 717, South Wales in 768, and North Wales in 777, but the Celtic Church at Armagh kept its independence until 1215, when Ireland passed under English dominion. The sword had

spoken, although there were many scattered Celtic believers throughout the British Isles who never parted with their faith.⁹

Between A.D. 500 and 1000, Irish Celtic missionaries were active in Christianizing Scotland, England, and the Germanic peoples had conquered the Western Roman Empire. These Celts founded numerous missionary centers in present-day France, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy. At the same time they doubtless reached their kinfolk in Brittany (France); Hallstatt, Upper Austria; and La Tène, Switzerland. In addition, the Irish Celtic missionaries also traveled northward to the Orkney Islands, Shetland Isles, Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Western Norway.

The Norwegians called these missionaries *papar*, i.e., “fathers,” from *papa*. An island east of Iceland is named after them, *Papey*. A lake in Iceland is also most likely named after the *papar*, called *Apavatn* today (in English, Monkey Lake). The right name is probably *Papavatn* (in English, Papa-lake), since there have never been monkeys in Iceland. In Lundareykjadalur, Iceland, there is an open air baptistery called *Krosslaug* (Cross Pool) used by westmen (in Icelandic *vestmenn*, as the Celts were called by the Norwegians) for baptisms by total immersion.¹⁰ They were said to adhere to Judaism, an expression used to indicate observers of the Jewish Sabbath or the seventh day of the week as Sabbath. The Irish geographer Dicuil wrote (c. 825) that a priest had told him that a hundred years earlier missionaries had found their way to the Faroe Islands. Hence,

⁹Leslie Hardinge, *The Celtic Church in Britain* (Brushton, NY: Teach Services, 2005), xii, xiii. This is a reprint of *The Celtic Church in Britain*, Church Historical Society series, no. 91 (London: S.P.C.K., for the Church Historical Society, 1972). The 1972 edition is the published version of Hardinge’s “Beliefs and Practices of the Celtic Church in Britain” (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1963).

¹⁰See Appendix A.

Celtic settlers lived at least as early as 725 on the Faroe Islands and most likely in Iceland too. The Irish missionary Brendan (484-578) is said to have sailed to Iceland to see his brethren there. As already mentioned the people of Western Norway knew these Irish missionaries and gave them their names *papar* and *vestmenn*.

Therefore, the very first part of Norway which accepted Christianity was Western Norway due to Celtic Christian missionary activities there, in addition to trade between these two peoples. Roman Catholic Christianity came much later from the south as will be shown below. The great Icelandic poet and historian Snorri Sturluson (1178?–1241) wrote in the 1200s that while the largest number of Norwegian Christians had been baptized along the west coast of Norway, the Roman Catholic “canon law had been unknown to most of them.”¹¹ This supports the thesis that it was not Roman Catholic Christianity which first reached Norway, but Celtic Christianity, which has been often overlooked.

Professor Jón Baldvin Hannibaldsson thinks the reason for the historical neglect of Celtic Christianity is that too little research has been done regarding the commercial, social, political, and religious interactions between the Celts and the Norse people, during the period A.D. 500-1000. Instead, he opines, there has been an excessive emphasis on “scandinavianism,”¹² i.e. exclusive historical interest in the Nordic countries alone, at the expense of the multilayered, interactive, and interdependent economic, social, political, and religious activities between Western Norway in particular and the Shetland Islands,

¹¹Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, vol. 2 (Reykjavík, Iceland: Mál og Menning, 2002), 827.

¹²Kolbrún Bergþórsdóttir, *Jón Baldvin –Tilhugalíf* (Reykjavík, Iceland: Vaka Helgafell, 2002), 98, 101.

Orkney Isles, Scotland, Inner Hebrides, and Ireland, not to mention Iceland and the Faroe Islands. Hannibaldsson also believes that there existed much more friendly communications and interactions between the Nordic people and the Celts than histories generally convey.

The Roman Catholic Church in Norway

The Roman Catholic Church became dominant in Norway when the Dane and staunch Roman Catholic King Canute the Great (King of England from 1016, King of Denmark from 1018, and King of Norway from 1028/30) invaded Norway from the south and defeated King Olafr Haraldsson of Norway at Stiklastaðr 29 July 1030. For most of his reign, Canute the Great resided in England, the stronghold of the Anglo-Saxon Catholic Christianity, from whence he forced Denmark and Norway to throw in their lot with the representatives of the Roman mission. From A.D. 1030 until the Reformation of the sixteenth century, Norway remained officially Roman Catholic.

The Reformation in Norway

A Danish King, Christian III, introduced the Lutheran Reformation into Norway in 1536. A year later the Danish Church Ordinance was proposed, and in 1539, was officially adopted by a Norwegian church council. Thus the church of Norway became an extension of the Church of Denmark. To borrow an expression mentioned above, “the grammatico-historical interpretation of Scriptures” as practiced by the church at Antioch became the guiding light of the church in Norway. Unfortunately when royal absolutism was introduced in Denmark-Norway in 1660, the Church of Norway came under royal control until the nineteenth century.

Rise of Pietism in Norway

After the Peace of Westphalia that ended in 1648 the Thirty Years' War, freedom of conscience had been reestablished in Germany and Scandinavia, and expressions of faith by German Protestants accelerated at an unprecedented pace. In the largely Lutheran north Germany, Philipp Jacob Spener, the former court chaplain at Saxony, called for a revival of evangelical preaching and lay fervor in his influential work *Pia Desideria* (Pious desires) in 1675. The resulting movement, known as Pietism, spread rapidly throughout Lutheran Germany and to Scandinavia. Spener recommended that believers should meet in conventicles¹³ or small assemblies to exercise their faith. Such religious assemblies became illegal in Denmark and Norway when King Christian VI in 1741 issued a royal decree known as Konventikkelplakaten (the Conventicle Decree) prohibiting any such assemblies without the consent of the state church. Thus the Lutheran Protestants of Norway and Denmark again lost their freedom of assembly. During the Enlightenment of the 1700s, rationalism spread among the clergy in the state church of Norway.

The Enlightenment

Modern rationalism sprang from the Enlightenment or the Age of Reason led by the philosophes¹⁴ of eighteenth-century Europe and North America. Enlightenment

¹³Conventicle is from the Latin word *conventiculum* which translates into English *small assembly*. Such religious assemblies were for example held illegally and secretly by certain Protestant sects that disputed the authority of the Church of England in the 16th and 17th centuries as well as in Scandinavia after the mid-seventeenth century.

¹⁴There were “many philosophes,” but “one Enlightenment,” says Peter Gay. He asserts that since the word “philosophe” is “a synonym for the men of Enlightenment all over the Western world,” it should be “naturalized” without the “awkward italics.” Peter

rationalism rejected any assertion incompatible with natural and scientific understanding, yet, nevertheless, often accepted transcendental mysticism which is found already in Platonic philosophy and Gnosticism. Peter Gay argues that the philosophes' experience was a pagan experience "directed against their Christian inheritance and depended upon paganism of classical antiquity, but it was also *modern* paganism, emancipating from classical thought as much as from Christian dogma." Convinced that they were emerging from centuries of darkness and ignorance, the "men of the Enlightenment united on a vastly ambitious program, a program of secularism, humanity, cosmopolitanism, and freedom above all"—the freedom of "moral man to make his own way in the world,"¹⁵ aided by human reason alone, without reference to biblical revelation.

Hans Nielsen Hauge, Norwegian Pietist Reformer

The Protestant Lutheran pietist and lay-preacher Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771-1824) of Norway viewed the Bible as the revealed word of God—as had the primitive Christian Church during the first centuries, the Celtic Church (from ca. 300 to ca. 1100), and early Protestantism in Norway (1536-1797). On the basis of the Bible alone, Hauge presented the gospel of Jesus Christ, while at the same time resisting the inroads of theological rationalism from the European Enlightenment. Also, in common with other Pietists, Hauge criticized the "dead orthodoxy" and ritualism that characterized much of the State Church in Norway during his time. The heart of the Pietist critique of the post-Reformation Protestant scholasticism was that in overemphasizing salvation "by faith

Gay, *The Rise of Modern Paganism*, vol. 1 of *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1977), 3, 4.

¹⁵Gay, x, 3.

alone,” to the exclusion of sanctification, and of all spiritual exertion and effort, orthodox Protestantism had reduced faith to mere intellectual assent to doctrines, thus giving professed believers assurance of salvation without any change of life.

Hans Nielsen Hauge had little in common with the Enlightenment in general, except for the philosophes’ cry for freedom of conscience and expression, which they borrowed from the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformers who had so ably advocated that inalienable freedom on a biblical basis. But by the mid-eighteenth century, freedom of conscience had been crushed in Norway by the Konventikkelplakaden of 1741.¹⁶ Therefore when Hans Nielsen Hauge came upon the scene to preach and write in 1796, he ignored the Konventikkeplakaden of 1741 which limited his freedom to preach and write, and he disputed at the same time the authority of the State Church to fuse the rationalism of the Enlightenment with the biblical revelation of truth. To him, neither philosophy nor human reason alone could replace or interpret the revealed word of God in Scriptures, since Scripture was its own interpreter and the final revelation of God. Because of his stand on freedom of expression and on the word of God as the only true enlightenment, Hauge was sentenced and imprisoned for much of the eight long years from 1804 through 1811, in accordance with the Konventikkeplakaden.

Hauge has been characterized as the most important person in Norwegian Church life since the Reformation in Norway of 1536-37.¹⁷ At the age of twenty-five, while working on his father’s farm at Tune in Smålenene, Hans Nielsen Hauge had a personal

¹⁶Konventikkelplakaden or the Conventicle Act forbade religious assemblies of more than five or more people outside the auspices of the state church. It was repealed in 1842 in Norway.

¹⁷*100 Viktige Bøker* (Oslo: Lie & Co.s Boktrykkeri A.s., 1984), 8.

encounter with God. From then on he was convinced that he should share his Christian faith with others. Hauge's message emphasized the type of spirituality he felt originated with Martin Luther and his theology always remained within the bounds of Lutheran doctrine. He worked extensively for the next eight years, especially in rural Norway where 90 percent of the population of about 900,000 lived. During his life he wrote about seventeen books, of which were printed an estimated 200,000 to 250,000 copies, making Hauge by far the most-read author in Norway at that time. Because of his preaching and writing, the Bible was set free from the rationalistic interpretations of the state church and given back to the people, igniting the greatest religious revival Norwegians had experienced in almost 300 years.¹⁸ Professor H. N. H. Ording, in his introduction to the *Hans Nielsen Huges Skrifter*, emphasizes Hauge's great appreciation of the Bible, and how it shaped his personal experience, preaching, and writing.¹⁹

Central to Hauge's theology was his view of "living faith," which is revealed when the believer follows Christ as his master and example. This faith gives the believer a burning desire to lead others to Christ. Faith also seeks fellowship with other believers. But faith results especially in an active and unconditional obedience to the calling and the will of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. According to Ording, therefore, because of the ethically binding results of the atonement, Hauge preached salvation by grace alone, through faith, that is, justification by faith and sanctification by grace, but he avoided the term "by faith alone" because of the way that term was being misused by the

¹⁸H. N. H. Ording, ed., *Hans Nielsen Huges Skrifter* [Complete works of Hans Nielsen Hauge], 7 vols. in 8 (Oslo: Andaktsbokselskapet, 1947-1954), 6:108-148.

¹⁹Ording, 1:27-31.

state church of his time. A “living faith” that binds the believer to ethical sanctification was the core of Hauge’s Christian understanding.²⁰

Professor A. Ch. Bang, in his biography of Hans Nielsen Hauge, points out that Hauge knew the celebrated German Lutheran biblical scholar Johann Albrecht Bengel’s (1687-1752) commentary on the Book of Revelation, *Erklärte Offenbarung Johannis*.²¹ However, it seems that the prophecies of the Revelation never unfolded to Hauge’s understanding, for when Hauge himself commented on the book of Revelation, his emphasis was typically on grace and sanctification.²²

When the Constitution of Norway (*Norges Grunnlov*) was adopted May 16 and signed May 17, 1814, in accordance with the recommendations of the Norwegian Constituent Assembly (*Riksforsamlingen*) at Eidsvoll, three of Hauge’s followers were on that committee of 112. Hauge was therefore not only the renewer of the church, but his influence was also felt when Norway got its independence from Denmark and its own constitution as well.

Hans Nielsen Hauge was instrumental in igniting an unprecedented spiritual revival in Norway. Although he did not directly herald the Second Advent of Jesus Christ, his pathbreaking work prepared the Norwegian soil, so to speak, for the Second Advent Movement which came to Norway decades later. In Southern Norway, where

²⁰Ording, 1:48-53.

²¹Ording, 1:224-232; cf. A. Chr. Bang, *Hans Nielsen Hauge og hans Samtid* (Kristiania: J. W. Cappelens Forlag, 1910), 132; see also Johann Albrecht Bengel, *Sextio Uppbyggelig Tal Öfwer Johannis eller fastmer Jesu Christi Uppenbarelse* (Götheborg: Samuel Norber, 1797).

²²Ording, 1:224-233.

Hauge had done much of his work, another revival began in the late 1840s and grew into the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway. Because of his emphasis on piety and true Christian living, based on the Bible as the final word of God, Hans Nielsen Hauge may indeed be considered the forerunner of the Second Advent Movement in Norway.

When I began my research, there was no comprehensive historical study that recounted, explained, and clarified the origins of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway, as it grew from a movement of individual believers in the 1840s to an officially organized church in 1887. The best evidence suggested that the discovery of the seventh-day Sabbath by the four families that became the nucleus of Norwegian Adventism did not result from any contact with other Sabbath keepers, but was derived directly from their own study of the Bible, and their faith in the Bible as the binding word of God so ably advocated by Hans Nielsen Hauge. This was unusual and invited comparison and contrast with the spread and development of the Seventh-day Adventist church in other places.

Original sources on Norwegian Adventist history were plentiful but had previously remained scattered and unexplored. It was essential that these sources should be preserved and documented before any more time elapsed.

Secondary sources focusing on the cultural and socio-economic aspects of Norwegian history were readily available. Volumes of church history explaining the general outline and specific development of Christianity in Western Christendom, as it used to be termed, and writings on the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church reflect the research which has been done already on the impact and historical importance

of spirituality. All of these have been combined to form the background of the establishment of an organized Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway.

Statement of the Problem

Some works have been published about the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway from the arrival of John G. Matteson in 1878 until the first Norwegian Conference of Seventh-day Adventists was officially organized in 1887. None, however, have focused on the specific background provided by the revival of Hans Nielsen Hauge, nor detailed early developments among the four farmers in the late 1840s in Southern Norway.

Purpose and Delimitations

The purpose of this dissertation is to reconstruct, step by step, chronologically, the historical background and development of Norwegian Seventh-day Adventism from the Haugean revival of the early 1800s to the establishment of the first Norwegian Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in 1887. This purpose has required the examination of all available sources on the church's relationship to both individuals and to other churches, to the extent that those relationships have been reconstructed. Besides the writings of the pioneers and later members of the church, other writings have been consulted. Some of these sources contain the critical opinions of foes, and others express words of support and defense by friends. These have been examined for the light they have shed on the historical development of the church.

Since John G. Matteson played a central role in the development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway, a partial biographical sketch of him has been

developed, but it has been delimited to aspects of his life that are essential to an understanding of his role in the history of the Seventh-day Adventists in Norway during the above-mentioned period. Ellen G. White's three visits to Norway also shed light on the historical progression of the Seventh-day Adventist Church there and have been examined accordingly.

Review of Prior Research and Primary Sources

Prior Research

The brief, unsigned article on "Norway" in the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* presents a fair sketch of the history of Adventists in Norway.²³ However, the article begins with the year 1874 which is far too late, since the story begins sometime during the 1840s, as noted above.

Arthur W. Spalding authored four volumes on the origin and history of Seventh-day Adventists. They form a relatively objective account, although as Spalding himself wrote in the Foreword, it was written for "believers." Volume 2 includes a few pages on the arrival of the Seventh-day Adventist message in Scandinavia, which in spite of their brevity, are well documented and provide the reader with a good overview.²⁴

Richard Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant*, provides a broad history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, including brief references to the work in Norway. A later edition, revised by Floyd Greenleaf, is less detailed in its documentation than the original.²⁵

²³ *SDA Encyclopedia*, 1996 ed., s.v. "Norway."

²⁴ Arthur Whitefield Spalding, *Origin and History of the Seventh-day Adventists*, 4 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1961).

²⁵ Richard W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1979), 90, 141, 147, 148; Richard W. Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf, *Light*

Volume 3 of Arthur L. White's six-volume biography, *Ellen G. White*, picks up only the "high points of her faithful labor" in Scandinavia.²⁶ Although his account of her visits to Norway is not a detailed treatment, it is balanced and well-documented and therefore of great value. His extensive knowledge of Ellen G. White in general makes his selection of high points the more reliable and interesting.²⁷

Edwin Torkelsen gives a thorough and scholarly treatment of Ellen G. White's three visits to Norway in 1885, 1886, and 1887 in his book *Ellen G. White og Norge*.²⁸ Torkelsen's account provides a much needed balance to the sometimes idealistic account of the same period by John G. Matteson. Torkelsen's book is based on his paper "Ellen G. White in Norway 1885-1887."²⁹

D. A. Delafield's *Ellen G. White in Europe* also treats her three visits to Norway.³⁰ His chapters on Norway are based mainly on Ellen G. White's own papers and to a far lesser degree on Norwegian historical sources.

Bearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, rev. ed. (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2000), 87, 137, 143, 209.

²⁶Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 6 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1981-1986), 3:316.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 3:322-328, 346-352, 367-370.

²⁸Edwin Torkelsen, *Ellen G. White og Norge* (Røyse, Norway: Signum Forlaget, 1988).

²⁹Edwin Torkelson, "Ellen G. White in Norway 1885-1887," in *Ellen G. White in Europe: Symposium Papers* (Bracknell, Berkshire, England: Ellen G. White—Seventh-day Adventist Research Center, Newbold College, 1987).

³⁰D. A. Delafield, *Ellen G. White in Europe* (Alma Park, Grantham, Lincolnshire, England: Stanborough Press, 1975), 115-126, 200-206, 297-306.

Lewis Harrison Christian provides glimpses of Norwegian Adventist history in his *Sons of the North*, the only general history of Adventists of Scandinavian descent.³¹ A Scandinavian himself, Christian worked with many of the people in the book. His account includes material on the Oakland, Wisconsin, church and on John G. Matteson. The book is neither scholarly nor critical of its sources but is useful in conjunction with other sources.

Church historian Adriel D. Chilson takes readers to the American “West” of the mid-nineteenth century, when the state of Wisconsin, USA, was the home of many Adventist leaders. Chilson introduces the Olsens of Oakland, Wisconsin, during their first years in the United States. Their experience, together with that of the Sørensens (Serns), Loes, Johnsons, and Matteson, became an important background to the history of the SDA Church in Norway.³² Chilson also wrote an illuminating book on John G. Matteson.³³ The many quotation marks indicate his use of sources although there are no source references in the book itself. However, Chilson’s paper, on which the book was apparently based, contains extensive documentation.³⁴

Louis Martin Halswik’s paper, “The Advent Message and Its Progress among the Danish-Norwegian People in America,” provides background material to the history of

³¹Lewis Harrison Christian, *Sons of the North* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1942), 101-123, 183-196.

³²Adriel D. Chilson, *Trial and Triumph on a Western Frontier* (Elko, NV: Heritage, 1976), 40ff.

³³Adriel D. Chilson, *Gospel Viking* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1981).

³⁴Adriel D. Chilson, “Biography of John G. Matteson,” 1976, HR-LLU.

the SDA Church in Norway.³⁵ It contains a series of short biographies of Danish–Norwegian SDA ministers. Chapter 1 deals with the Oakland church and chapter 2 with John G. Matteson. The author claims personal acquaintance with many of the people he wrote about, but he gives no documentation for his information.

Lawrence W. Onsager has written two papers, one of them published, on the Oakland, Wisconsin, church of Seventh-day Adventists. Here again is valuable background material.³⁶ Floyd and Elsie Serns give the genealogy of the Serns family, one of the four families who left Norway for the United States in 1849 and 1850. The “Serns Family Saga” is especially useful in determining relationships of various family members and dates of immigration.³⁷

The prior publication that probably comes closest to the interest of this dissertation is that of Øivind Gjertsen, who gives a factual account of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway in *Americana Norvegica*, which is a Norwegian contribution to American studies edited by Sigmund Skard.³⁸ Gjertsen’s account is based

³⁵Louis Martin Halswick, “The Advent Message and Its Progress among the Danish Norwegian People in America,” 1959, unpublished manuscript, CAR.

³⁶Lawrence W. Onsager, “Ole Andres Olsen and Adventist Missions,” 1980, CAR; idem, “The First Norwegian-American Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States,” 1982, CAR.

³⁷Floyd and Elsie Serns, “Serns Family Saga from late 1500 to 1850, Fleskaasen, Leipsland, Norway, to America” (unpublished manuscript, Heritage Room, Loma Linda University Library, Loma Linda, CA, n.d.).

³⁸Sigmund Skard, ed., *Americana Norvegica*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), 2:74-93.

on his own unpublished thesis, “Syvendedags-adventismen” (University of Oslo, 1961). I was unable to obtain access to Gjersten’s thesis at the University.³⁹

Several years after I began my research, Terje Johannessen began researching the same period of Norwegian Adventist history. He has written an extensive and well-documented unpublished manuscript in Norwegian, which is preserved in the historical archives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Oslo, Norway.⁴⁰

Primary Sources

John Gottlieb Matteson (1835-1896) was an eyewitness to most of the early history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway, simply because he was the main instrument in making that history. Matteson was not only an ardent preacher who conducted revivals and established churches, he was also a prolific writer. It is primarily because of his autobiography, *Mattesons Liv*, his numerous articles (numbering close to 100), and his brief contribution to *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists*, that we know as much as we do about the origin, development, and early history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway.⁴¹ It is, however, important to balance the history of the Adventist Church in Norway as told by John G.

³⁹Øivind Gjertsen, *Syvendedagsadventismen* (Seventh-day Adventism) (Oslo: University of Oslo, 1961).

⁴⁰Terje Johannessen, *Norsk SDA Historia* (Norwegian SDA history), unpublished manuscript, 1998, HASDA.

⁴¹John G. Matteson, *Mattesons Liv* (College View, NE: International Publishing Assn., 1908); *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventist* (Basel: Imprimerie Polyglotte, 1886), 57-78.

Matteson with what others have to say about the matter. A number of accounts are to be found in the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* from 1877 to 1881.⁴²

John G. Matteson's autobiographical manuscript covers more or less the same material as does his autobiography, *Mattesons Liv*, mentioned earlier.⁴³ It is a good source for the history of the Oakland church and the early work among Scandinavians in the USA, in addition to the early history of the SDA church in Norway.

Mahlon Ellsworth Olsen (1873-1952) may also be considered an eyewitness to the early development of the Seventh-day Adventist history in Norway, because he was the son of Ole Anders Olsen (1845-1915) who, with his father Andrew Olsen, left Finsland, Norway, for the United States in 1850. O. A. Olsen became the leading pioneer of the formative years of Sabbatarian Adventism among Norwegians in Oakland, Wisconsin. Olsen's book *Origin and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists* has a separate chapter on the Scandinavian mission.⁴⁴ It is evident that this relatively short account is written by a scholar. His personal knowledge of the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway, and his familiarity with its very beginnings, makes his contribution particularly valuable for corroborating the accuracy of other early sources.⁴⁵ M. Martin

⁴²See the Bibliography.

⁴³See John G. Matteson, "The Providence of God in Events Connected with the Life of John G. Matteson," 1890, CAR.

⁴⁴Mahlon E. Olsen, *Origin and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1925), 345-361. Olsen earned a Ph.D. in English from the University of Michigan in 1909.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 345-346.

Olsen, another son of Anders (Andrew) Olsen, also provides good information on the Olsen family in his *Minder og Erfaringer*.⁴⁶

Other primary sources include articles in newspapers, journals, and magazines written at the time. Finally, the letters and manuscripts of Ellen G. White contain detailed references to her three visits to Norway and shed much light on the situation of the church in the late 1880s.

Methodology

The present study has been based on primary sources as much as possible. The primary sources consist of archival material such as protocols, letters, legal documents, and articles in journals, magazines, and newspapers.⁴⁷ All sources have been critically analyzed regarding their authenticity and in the light of their historical context. The views of the authors of any given source have been considered so as to determine the objective value of the material. A contextual-comparative approach was employed to evaluate the objectivity of a given source. Historical and other interrelationships between sources have been applied to ensure optimal objectivity and a factual descriptive account of the origin, development, and early history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway. Secondary sources have also been consulted and used as guidelines, especially when no primary sources were available. Some of these sources were sometimes more romantic than realistic. Yet, in spite of that problem, there remained a factual core in each story that was of great value in reconstructing the events of an epoch. The most severe defect of many secondary sources was their lack of documentation, which limited their

⁴⁶M. Martin Olsen, *Minder og Erfaringer* (København: n.p., n.d.), HR-LLU.

⁴⁷For the major archives, see List of Abbreviations and Bibliography.

usefulness to the degree that they could be corroborated. The study is presented chronologically. Chapter 1 describes backgrounds and beginnings from 1797 to 1850. The chapter establishes the religious link between Hans Nielsen Hauge and the four families, the Olsens, the Loes, the Johnsons, and the Serns, who became the nucleus of the beginnings of Sabbath-keeping Adventism among Norwegians. Hans Nielsen Hauge began to preach in 1797, calling people to repentance and attacking rationalism within the Lutheran Church in Norway. He placed great stress on the Bible as the only true word of God, and on the evangelical doctrines of faith and grace and the fruit of grace. The influence of Hauge was greatest among the peasants. Because of his preaching the four families mentioned above accepted the Bible as the infallible word of God, which in turn led them to accept the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath as their weekly day of rest. Because of their new faith they left Norway in 1849 and 1850 for the United States of America.

Chapter 2 deals primarily with the Oakland, Wisconsin, years (1849/1850-1877) of the Olsens, the Loes, the Johnsons, and the Serns families, respectively, who came to the United States, not as many others, to better their financial condition, but also to practice the spiritual light they had already found back home. In Oakland they found some relief from their spiritual troubles by joining the Methodist Church. Soon, however, they felt that there was lacking that perfect loyalty to the teachings of the Bible which they had hoped to find in a church that claimed to be practicing the apostolic faith. They were especially troubled over the question of baptism and the seventh-day Sabbath. Toward the end of the year 1854, they decided to step out and obey the fourth commandment of the Decalogue of the Bible even though it should involve severing their

church connections. Thus they formed the first known group of Sabbath-keeping Norwegian Christians in the world. Two and a half years after the Methodist Church expelled them for heresy, the group of Sabbath-keepers had doubled from four families to eight. In addition to keeping the Sabbath, by 1858 most of the members of these families also accepted baptism by immersion. About this time the little group came to the notice of the Adventist believers in Koshkonong, a nearby settlement, and within the same year almost the entire group accepted the Sabbatarian Adventist message.

Chapter 3 introduces the making of the preacher, writer, and leader John G. Matteson (1835-1896) who was born in Langeland, Denmark, and in 1854 left for the United States of America where he settled at New Denmark, Brown County, Wisconsin. In 1859 he was converted to Christianity and joined the Baptist Church. He studied at the Baptist Theological Seminary in Chicago (1860-1862) and was ordained as a Baptist minister in 1862. His immediate, all-consuming interest was to reach other people with the gospel. In 1863 he met P. H. Cady, and accepted Cady's Seventh-day Adventist beliefs. Most of Matteson's Baptist congregation soon became Adventists, and within a short time Matteson established Seventh-day Adventist churches in Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, and Missouri. In 1872 he began writing and publishing *Advent Tidende* (Advent Herald) in Danish. The magazine created interest for the Seventh-day Adventist message among Nordic people both in the United States and in Scandinavia. At the request of Seventh-day Adventist Norwegians in Oakland, Wisconsin, Matteson moved there in 1866. By that time he had married a Norwegian, Anna Sivertsen,⁴⁸ and they remained in Oakland for eleven years. In 1877 the General

⁴⁸*ML*, 83.

Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church requested Matteson to go as a missionary to Denmark. After a very successful year in Denmark, Matteson went to Norway and established his permanent headquarters in Christiania (now Oslo), the capital of Norway.

Chapter 4 presents Matteson in Norway. As early as 1874, the *Review and Herald* reported that several people in Norway had become interested in the Seventh-day Adventist message through reading *Advent Tidende*, and wished therefore for a preacher to be sent to Norway. Matteson was the answer to that request. He travelled widely in Norway, preaching the three angels' messages.⁴⁹ During his first winter Matteson held a series of meetings in Christiania. Many gladly accepted his message, while some ministers of the state church emphatically opposed him. On January 11, 1879, Matteson and thirty-two others informed the Norwegian authorities by letter that they had established a Christian church in Norway named "Den første Syvende-Dags Adventist Menighed i Kristiania."⁵⁰ In another letter of the same date, signed by Matteson alone, he promised to uphold all state laws regulating the Christian faith in Norway. On January 13 he wrote to the *Review and Herald*: "Last Sabbath we formed a church under the law of dissenters in this country. We went before the authorities and were by them

⁴⁹The terms "third angel's message" and "three angels' messages," as used among Adventists, refer to Rev 14:6-12, which Adventists regard as a prophetic prediction of their own work, to proclaim the gospel, including the seventh-day Sabbath, to the world in the setting of a pre-advent judgment, to be completed before the second appearing or Advent of Jesus Christ. See *SDAE*, s.v. "Three Angels' Messages"; E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 6:17; idem, *Selected Messages*, Book 2 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 116-117.

⁵⁰"Den første Syvende-Dags Adventist Menighed i Kristiania" translates: The first Seventh-day Adventist Church in Christiania.

acknowledged as a Christian church agreeable to law.”⁵¹ The same month the church was organized, Matteson started a publishing work, launching *Tidernes Tegn* (Signs of the times). By the end of 1879, 1200 copies were being printed monthly. During the next decade, the spread of Adventist publications resulted in the organization of new groups and churches in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark.

Chapter 5 deals with Ellen G. White’s three visits to Norway. The second session of the SDA European Missionary Council in 1884 adopted a resolution inviting Mrs. White and her son W. C. White to visit the European missions. Consequently, they spent two years (August 1885 to August 1887) in European countries. From Basel, Switzerland, then the headquarters of Adventist work in Europe, Mrs. White made repeated trips to England, Germany, France, Italy, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. In Christiania, she recognized the printing presses she had seen in a vision of January 3, 1875. While in Norway she gave valuable counsel that helped to establish right policies and plans in the formative days of the work in that area. During her last visit to Norway she witnessed the establishment of the first Norwegian Conference on 8 June 1887, at Moss (about 40 miles south of Christiania), with O. A. Olsen as president. He was of Norwegian stock, a son of Andrew Olsen, one of the four farmers who left Norway in the late 1840s because of their faith. At the next General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church the Norwegian Conference was officially admitted to the denomination’s “sisterhood of conferences.” The final chapter will summarize the findings and draw general conclusions.

⁵¹John G. Matteson, “Christian[i]a, Norway,” *RH*, February 13, 1879, 54.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the following institutions for their hospitality and the free use of their excellent recourses: Heritage Room and Special Collections, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California, USA; Rolvaag Memorial Library, St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota; the Center for Adventist Research and James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan; Ellen G. White Estate and the Office of Archives and Statistics, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland; Universitetsbiblioteket i Oslo (University of Oslo Library), Norway; Det teologiske Menighetsfakultet bibliotek (The library of the MF Norwegian School of Theology), Oslo, Norway; Riksarkivet, Statsarkivet i Oslo (The National Archive, and The Regional State Archive of Oslo), Oslo, Norway; Kristiansand folkebibliotek (Kristiansand Public Library), Kristiansand, Norway; Statsarkivet i Kristiansand (The Regional State Archive of Kristiansand), Kristiansand, Norway; Det Kongelige Bibliotek i København (The Royal Library in Copenhagen), Denmark; Historisk Arkiv for SyvendeDagsAdventisterne i Danmark (Historical Archive for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Denmark), Daugård, Denmark; Historiske Arkiv for Syvende-das Adventistene i Norge (Historical Archive for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway), Oslo, Norway; National and University Library of Iceland, Reykjavík, Iceland.

This work owes much to many people. First of all I would like to express my sincere thanks to the late Professor C. Mervyn Maxwell, the late Professor Kenneth Strand, and Professor George Knight for their invaluable support and encouragement through many years of research. I would also like to thank my dissertation committee at Andrews University, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Professor P. Gerard

Damsteegt, Professor Trevor O'Reggio, and especially the chairman, Professor Jerry Moon. No words will ever express well enough how grateful I am to Dr. Moon for his gift of many hours, good advice, invaluable criticisms, and patient backing.

Heartfelt thanks are due to my wife Hallgerður Ásta, the loving and lovable sustainer of my life. Deep thanks go to my wonderful children: Cecilia and her family, Guðjón and his family, Erling and his family, and Herwig and his family. I would also like to thank my brother Dr. Erling Snorrason and his wife Jeanette especially, and finally my thanks go to my good friends Eva and Edwin Torkelsen, Rita and Terje Johannessen, and Judy Storfjell for their interest and enduring encouragement. And, thanks be to God, my Creator and my Redeemer without whom things would have been very different.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUNDS AND BEGINNINGS

Introduction

The beginnings of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination (from the 1840s to 1877) in Norway are closely linked with the religious Sabbath experiences of Anders Olson Rekevik, his wife Berte Olsdotter Øvland, his brother-in-law Søren Olson Øvland, and his wife Gunvor Tomasdotter.¹ Anders Olson refers to these beginnings as “that little beginning in Norway and later in Wisconsin” which grew “into a mighty work.”²

Five other families were also largely influential in relationship to these beginnings. They were: Ole Sørensen Øvland, a widower; Bertor Olson Øvland and his

¹In the USA, Anders Olson Rekevik changed his name to Andrew Olsen; Berte Olsdotter Øvland became Birthe Olsen; and Søren Olson Øvland became Soren Loe.

At this time in Norway it was customary to take the father’s first name as a surname. The word “son” or “daughter” was then added to the father’s name in accordance with the gender. The name of the farm was then used as the family name. The family name could therefore change from time to time when and if the family moved to another farm. For example, Ole Anders’ full name at birth was: “Ole Anders Olson Skogen.” “Skogen” was the name of the farm. That he was registered at baptism as Ole Haugedal must have been a clerical mistake. When people moved to the USA, they often changed their names. Typically the words “son” or “daughter” were dropped and “sen” adopted for both genders in most cases with the Norwegians. A few Norwegians used “son.” The Swedes usually used “son.” The Danes most often used “sen,” Matteson being an exception. In some cases the family name was dropped altogether or replaced by a new one.

²C. McReynolds, “A Brief Sketch of the Life of Andrew Olsen,” *RH*, September 10, 1908, 17.

wife Kirsti Aanensdotter; Ole Sørensen Heggland³ and his wife Ingjerd Aanensdotter Reiersdal; Tarald Jensen Fiskaa⁴ and his first wife, Andrea Birgitte Sturve; and Halvor Olson Øvland and his wife Aase.⁵ These seven families immigrated to the United States of America in 1849 and 1850, and 1856.

Their guiding light was the supreme authority of the Scriptures both in doctrine and ethics, which led them to accept the seventh-day Sabbath as the day of worship and the sign of the new covenant, baptism by immersion as their signature of the new covenant agreement, and the second coming of Christ in glory as the ushering in of the eternal kingdom of Christ, as we shall see later. Their firm belief led them eventually to join the Seventh-day Adventist Church.⁶

³Known in the USA as Ole Heggland Serns.

⁴Known in the USA as Taral F. Johnson. This information is based on a document preserved in a box concerning Taral's son O. A. Johnson. The document was written by O. A. Johnson's youngest brother Benjamin S. Johnson, who was born April 30, 1875 and died April 7, 1947. Here he identifies his father as Tarald Fiskaa Johnson. The first and middle names totally agree with Tarald's name as it was known in Norway. The name is also in accordance with the name of Tarald as it is written on his tombstone in Oakland, Wisconsin. Benjamin also states that he is "the youngest and last survivor of a family of twenty-two children." This also agrees with the known facts about Tarald Fiskaa Johnson who had twenty-two children, of whom ten were born in Norway. He immigrated from Vågsbygd in Southern Norway to the USA in 1849. After arriving in the USA he adopted his mother's surname Johnson. Her full name was Gunvor Johnsdotter Sodal (the second half of a woman's surname was "daughter" [*dotter*] instead of "son"). The above mentioned document is preserved in O. A. Johnson's Personal Collection, GCA.

⁵Sometimes the source does not contain the complete name of the individual.

⁶C. McReynolds, 16, 17.

Christianity in Norway before the Arrival of Seventh-day Adventism

The Celtic Christian Church, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Norwegians, from the Ninth Century to 1537⁷

The dominant religion in Norway before the arrival of Christianity was the ancient German religion. As in other ancient religions, the sun god occupied a central position in the German religion already during the Stone Age and “burst into much blossom”⁸ during the Bronze Age, which was true of all other Indo-European peoples as well. Fertility worship was also very common.⁹ During the first centuries of Christianity the most popular gods of the German tribes were Wotan, Thor, and Tyr. Among the

⁷See appendix C.

⁸Ólafur Briem, *Heiðinn siður á Íslandi* (Paganism in Iceland) (Reykjavík: Bókautgáfa Menningarsjóðs, 1945), 125.

The Danish Trundholm sun chariot on spoked wheels pulled by a horse is believed to be a sculpture illustrating the sun, an important part of Nordic Bronze Age mythology. It is on display in the National Museum of Denmark.

The old High German sun goddess is Sunna, whose name is found in the name of the first day of the week, *Sunnudagur* or Sunday. Sculptures of sun disks are frequently found on walls, burial vaults, and large rocks from the Bronze Age. I have been to such locations in Sweden.

Landnámabók (Book of Settlement in Iceland), which was written during the first half of the twelfth century, states that sun rites were still practiced among the Vikings in the tenth century. It mentions Þorkell Máni (Thorkell Moon) who was the speaker of the Icelandic Parliament from 970 to 984 and the grandson of the first official settler in Iceland, Ingólfr Arnarson. When his dying day was approaching, he requested to be carried out “into the rays of the sun,” according to an ancient heathen custom. But instead of committing himself to the sun goddess, he put “himself in the hands of the god who had created the sun,” probably due to Celtic Christian influence. The book also states that he “lived as pure a life as Christian men did, those whose ethical manner of conducting themselves was the best there was.” *Landnámabók Íslands* (Reykjavík: Helgafell, Unuhúsi, 1948), 12.

⁹Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson, *Blót í norrænum sið* (Offering in Nordic religion) (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, Félagsvísindastofnun, 1997), 123, 124.

Norse people at the arrival of Christianity in Norway the chief deities were Thor, Odinn (same as Wotan), Freyr, and Freyja.¹⁰

The Christianization of Norway took place during a long period of time, most likely two centuries at least. The Norwegians came in contact with Christianity because of their age-old practice of trade with other parts of Europe and during the Viking raids from the ninth to the eleventh centuries especially. The Swedish Vikings forged east to the Baltic lands and Russia; the Danes pushed along the coast of the Nordic Sea to France and England, whereas the Norwegians sailed west to the islands of Shetland, Orkney, the Outer and Inner Hebrides, Ireland, the Isle of Man, the Isle of Scilly, the Faeroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland, and Vinland (now known as North America).¹¹

In all these areas to the west of Norway, except Greenland and Vinland, before the arrival of the Norwegian Vikings, the dominant faith was the ancient Celtic Christian Church, which was biblical in character, doctrine, and manners.¹² The Celtic Christians held an absolute faith in the Bible as the word of God, and interpreted it “literally.”¹³ Natural outgrowths of this tenet were the “observance of the Sabbath of the Old Testament,” and emphasis on Christ as “the substitutionary sacrifice for sin.”¹⁴ “Baptism

¹⁰*Íslenska alfræðiorðabókin* (Icelandic Encyclopedia), 1992 ed., s.v. “germönsk trúarbrögð.”

¹¹*Aschehoug og Gyldendals Store Norske leksikon* (Aschehoug and Gyldendals great Norwegian encyclopedia), 1980 ed., s.v. “Norge, Kultur – Religion.”

¹²Hardinge, 205.

¹³*Ibid.*, 202, 205.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 203, 206.

by instructed and believing candidates was carried out by triple immersion.”¹⁵ The “Lord’s Supper was performed with the use of bread and wine, partaken by all,” and preceded by the communal washing of feet.¹⁶ The “Celtic eschatology was simple and concrete,” teaching that the “final events were near at hand.”¹⁷

Whole Norwegian families became Celtic Christians. Examples include the family of Ketill flatnefr (“the flat-nose”) Bjarnarson,¹⁸ the Earl of the Inner Hebrides during the first half of the ninth century.¹⁹ Some of his children immigrated to Iceland along with other Norwegian Celtic Christians.

Emigration from Norway to Iceland reached its peak²⁰ during the reign of Haraldr I. hárfagri (“the fair-haired,” the one with beautiful hair), who was born ca. 865.²¹ According to tradition, after the battle at Hafrsfjörðr close to Stavanger in ca. 885, he became the first Norwegian king to rule over the whole of Norway. He also conquered Shetland, Orkney, and the Inner Hebrides.²² His reign as the sole king of Norway and the

¹⁵Ibid., 204.

¹⁶Ibid., 204.

¹⁷Ibid., 207.

¹⁸A. Chr. Bang, *Den Norske Kirkes Historie* (The History of the Norwegian Church) (Kristiania, Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag, 1912), 31.

¹⁹*Íslenska alfræðiorðabókin*, 1992 ed., s.v. “Auður (Ketilsdóttir) djúpúðga.”

²⁰*Aschehoug og Gyldendals Store Norske leksikon*, 1980 ed., s.v. “Harald 1. Hårfagre.

²¹Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla* (the literal translation of the title is: *The Terrestrial Globe*; Sturluson’s three *Heimskringla* volumes contain the history of all Norwegian kings from mythological times to 1177), 3 vols. (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 2002), 2:551-591.

²²*Íslenska alfræðiorðabókin*, 1992 ed., s.v. “Haraldur 1. hárfagri.”

above mentioned islands lasted until ca. 930 and was a major factor contributing to the immigration.

When the Norwegians immigrated to Iceland (870 to 930), the Celtic Christians were already there, with “Irish books, bells, and crosiers.”²³ The Vikings called them *papar* from the Latin word *papa*, which is translated “father,”²⁴ because they were pastors. The Christian Orkney *papar*, who were of the same religious persuasion as the Iceland *papar*, were said to be “Judaizers” or “*iudaismo adherentes*” by which the author implies that they were adherents of the Jewish religion. This reflects the author’s polemical bias, because the term “Jew” had had a negative connotation for centuries because Christians viewed them as keeping the law of Moses and therefore the seventh-day Sabbath as a means of salvation.²⁵ It may look rather remarkable to accuse the Celtic *papar* (pastors) of Judaizing as late as 1160/75, because by this time most Judaizing Christians should have disappeared. The term “Judaize” appears probably for the first time in the letter of the apostle Paul to the Galatians (the name by which the Celts were known in Anatolia at the time of Paul), when he begged them not to add anything to the perfect gift of salvation, in order to deserve grace by their own merits, whether or not

²³Are Þorgilsson, *Íslendingabók* (The Book of Icelanders) (Kaupmannahöfn: Prentsmiðja S. L. Möllers, 1887), 4. Ari fróði (Ari “the Scholar”) Þorgilsson (1067-1148) was a historian and a priest, who probably also helped write the *Landnámabók Islands* (The Settlement Book of Iceland), written in the early twelfth century, which specifies 435 original settlers.

²⁴*Landnámabók Íslands*, 1.

²⁵Inger Ekrem and Lars Boje Mortensen, eds., *Historia Norwegie* (Norwegian History), trans. Peter Fisher (University of Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2003), 65, 66. The editors believe the book was written in Norway ca. 1160-1175. See discussion of date and place on pp. 11-24. See also Beverly Ballin Smith et al, eds. *West Over Sea: Studies in Scandinavian Sea-borne Expansion and Settlement Before 1300* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke, 2007), 229.

they were of Jewish ancestry (Gal 2:14). To begin with, Judaizing referred primarily to the rite of circumcision which obligated the candidate to keep faithfully the laws of Moses, later understood to include all the Jewish traditions. By the end of the first century, the question about circumcision ceased to be of any importance in the Church.

By the fourth century, however, the term “judaize” had acquired a new polemical usage among Christians. According to Canon 29 of the Council of Laodicea in 365, “Christians must not judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, rather honoring the Lord’s Day; and, if they can, resting then as Christians, [but] if any shall be found to be Judaizers, let them be anathema from Christ.” When Augustine of Canterbury came from Rome in 595 to convert the Saxons in Britain he charged the Celts with not only Judaizing, but also being ignorant of the holy sacraments and festivals of the Church, because they kept the seventh-day Sabbath instead of Sunday and had the Bible as the only foundation of their beliefs. Queen consort Margaret (d. 1093) demanded that her husband, King Malcolm III of Scotland (d. 1093), insist on strict observance of the Lord's Day, because she found that the Celts of Scotland “did not reverence the Lord's day, but that they held Saturday to be the Sabbath.”²⁶ She was canonized a Roman Catholic saint in the year 1250 by Pope Innocent IV, because of her influence over her husband and his court, through “which she promoted, in conformity with the Gregorian reform, the interests of the church and of the English population conquered by the Scots in the previous century.”²⁷

²⁶ See William Forbes Skene, *Celtic Scotland: A History of Ancient Alban (Church and Culture)*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1887), 348, 349.

²⁷ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. “Margaret of Scotland, Saint.”

According to Anderson “The Roman ‘movement’ to supersede the Celtic Sabbath with Sunday ‘culminated in the production of an apocryphal ‘Letter of Jesus,’ or ‘Letter of Lord’s day,’ alleged to have been found on the altar of Peter in Rome; and is said in the annals to have been brought to Ireland by a pilgrim (c. 886). Upon this basis laws were promulgated, imposing heavy penalties for those that violated on Sunday certain regulations derived from Jewish prohibitions for Sabbath. . . . There is in fact no historical evidence that Ninian, or Patrick, or Columba, or any of their contemporaries in Ireland, kept Sunday as a Sabbath.’”²⁸ Hence, the statement in *Historia Norwegie* that the *papar* were “*iudaismo adherentes*” is not strange at all, because the question about Sabbath-keeping was still very much alive within the Christian community where Celtic Christianity still had influence.

The Celts on the British Isle were also called *vestmenn* (“men from the west”), since their geographical location was to the west of Norway in contrast to the Norwegian Vikings whom the Celts called *austmenn* (men from the east), since they lived to the east of the Celtic areas mentioned above.²⁹

The book *De mensura orbis terrae* from 825 by the Irish (Celtic) monk Dicuilus is the first totally reliable source stating that Irish or Celtic Christians lived in Iceland before the arrival of the Norwegian Vikings.³⁰

²⁸A. O. Anderson and M. O. Anderson, eds., *Adomnan's Life of Columba* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1961), 28.

²⁹Porgilsson, 4.

³⁰Árni Daníel Júlíusson, Jón Ólafur Ísberg, and Helgi Skúli Kjartansson, eds., *Íslenskur söguatlas* (Illustrated Icelandic history), 3 vols. (Reykjavík: Íðunn, 1991), 1:36.

Some of the Norwegian immigrants to Iceland had become Celtic Christians before they left for Iceland.³¹ Among them were Auðr djúpúðga (“the wise”), daughter of the Norwegian Ketill flatnefr (“the flat-nose”), who was the Earl of the Inner Hebrides as mentioned above. Auðr was the wife of Olafr the White (called “the White,” because he believed in the White Christ), king of Dyflinn (Dublin), Ireland. She left Orkney for Iceland ca. 890 after both her husband and her son, Þorsteinn the Red, also a Christian and king of Scotland, lost their lives in battle.

Auðr’s brother Helgi bjóla (“the loser”) was also a Christian. He emigrated from the Inner Hebrides to Iceland. He spent one year with Ingólfr Arnarson³² who first in 867 and finally in 870, came to Iceland from Dalsfjörður, Fjarðarfylki, Norway, and settled in Reykjavík, Iceland’s capital today. Ingólfr is considered to be the first settler of Iceland, hence the first Icelander.³³ This may imply that even the first official Icelander got his knowledge about Iceland for Celtic Christians whether they were Celtic or Norse.

Ketill fíflski (“the fool”) also left the Inner Hebrides for Iceland. He settled in Iceland at Síðu, where there was a Celtic Christian Church. Other early Icelandic Christians included Helgi inn gamli (“the old”), Jörundur inn kristni (“the Christian”), and Helgi magri (“the skinny”), whose settlement was then, and is still, called Kristnes (Christ-ness).³⁴ These Norwegian Celtic Christians joined hands with the more ancient

³¹The reason why only Norwegian immigrants to Iceland are mentioned here, in addition to the two Norwegian kings, is because no records exist about Norwegian Celtic Christians except in the Icelandic Sagas which deal among other things with the history of the Norwegian settlers in Iceland and the history of the Norwegian kings.

³²*Landnámabók Íslands*, 7-12.

³³Þorgilsson, 4.

³⁴*Landnámabók Íslands*, 301.

Celtic Christians who had come to Iceland at least one and a half centuries before the Vikings.³⁵

Although the Celtic Church was experiencing “a time of transition and conformity” during the seventh and eighth centuries, it still constituted a major religious movement from the Isle of Scilly in the south to Shetland in the North, from Scotland in the east to Iceland in the west, and on the west coast of Norway. Hardinge wrote, “As a desert stream, gushing from the secret spring, for a while irrigates the wilderness, bringing life and fragrance into being, and then disappears, so the Celtic Christians for more than two centuries nourished Europe with the evangel of God.” Because they held Scripture as “supreme,” “patristic or papal notions and judgments had little weight with Celtic theologians.”³⁶

The center of the Celtic Church was located on the Iona Island of the Inner Hebrides, under the early leadership of Columba who came to the island in 563. Although the Norwegian Vikings repeatedly invaded this island during the period from 795 to the late tenth century, and even burned down the original monastery³⁷ of Columba and killed many Christians,³⁸ they gradually came to recognize the superiority of simple Christianity

³⁵Árni Óla, *Grúsk* (Inquiry), 4 vols. (Reykjavík: Ísafoldarprentsmiðja h.f., 1974), 4:7-33.

³⁶Hardinge, 201.

³⁷A Celtic monastery “consisted of a walled village in which the mixed society of a Christian community lived lives of virtue and devotion separated from the evils of their heathen neighbours.” In such a village lived “men, women, and children, single and in families” and its leader was called an “abbot.” Hardinge, 205.

³⁸*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2007 ed., s.v. “Iona.”

with its ethic of humble love, compared to the savage raids and blood feuds granted by their own Norse religion.

The earliest stronghold of Christianity in Norway was along the west coast of Norway,³⁹ apparently because of the interactive trade relations between Norway and Shetland, Orkney, the Outer and Inner Hebrides, Ireland, the Isle of Man, and the Isle of Scilly. All these were areas where Celtic Christianity dominated, therefore were most likely the region of the first encounter of the Norwegian Vikings with Celtic Christianity.

Olafr Tryggvason,⁴⁰ king of Norway from 995 to 1000, was probably on a Viking raid when he accepted Celtic Christianity and was baptized by the abbot (leader of the local Celtic church and community) on the Isle of Scilly.⁴¹ King Olafr Tryggvason witnessed the baptism of Earl Sigurdr Hlöðversson on the Celtic island of Orkney⁴² before voyaging to the Isle of Moster in Sunnhordland on the west coast of Norway, where Olafr was soon accepted as the supreme king of Norway. Eager to spread Christianity in Norway, Olafr built a church on Moster whose foundation remains under the present stone church erected in 1150.⁴³

³⁹R. Tønder Nissen, *De Nordiske Kirkers Historie* (The History of the Nordic Churches) (Kristiania: Th. Steens Forlags-Expedition, 1884), 26.

⁴⁰Sturluson, 2:653-770.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 2:686; Nissen, 24.

⁴²Nissen, 24.

⁴³Hjalti Hugason, *Kristni á Íslandi*, 4 vols., *Frumkristni og upphaf kirkju* (Christianity in Iceland, Primitive Christianity and the Beginnings of the Church) (Reykjavík: Alþingi, 2000), 1:33-38; Nissen, 24-27.

Olafr II Haraldsson,⁴⁴ king of Norway from 1015 to 1028, also visited Moster. He too seems to have been greatly influenced by the Celtic Church, since he continued the missionary work commenced by Olafr Tryggvason.⁴⁵ Only “twelve months and five nights” after his death on July 29, 1030, he was declared a saint by the Norwegian “people, the bishops, and the king.” Óláfr hinn helgi [St. Olaf in old Norwegian] or Olav den Hellige [St. Olaf in modern Norwegian] has “never ever” received a Roman Catholic “canonization,” according to professor Konrad von Maurer.⁴⁶ St. Olaf was supposed to have established the Roman Catholic Church at Moster in 1024 by holding a parliament there, which supposedly gave Roman Catholic canon law the same status as the civil laws of Norway. However, the alleged merging of canon law with civil law at this time is impossible to verify by primary sources.⁴⁷ To the contrary, the demand of the Roman Catholic Church for recognition of its ecclesiastical rights based on canon law met with great resistance as late as the reign of Sverrir Sigurðarson (1152-1202) who was a Celtic (non-Roman) priest in the Faeroe Islands until he became king of Norway in 1184. Sverrir’s resistance to the claims of the Roman Church was so resolute that even after his death he was excluded, by papal interdict, from all the sacraments and privileges of the

⁴⁴Sturluson, 2:771-1038; 3:1039-1105.

⁴⁵Nissen, 24.

⁴⁶Sturluson, 3:1094-1096; Konrad von Maurer, *Die Bekehrung Des Norwegischen Stammes Zum Christenthume, in ihrem geschichtlichen Verlaufe quellenmäßig geschildert* (The conversion of the Norwegian tribes to Christianity, in their historical course described according to sources) (Munich: Christian Kaiser, 1855), 645. Professor Maurer was a leading authority of Germanic and Nordic legal and constitutional history.

⁴⁷Nissen, 27.

Roman Church.⁴⁸ It should be noted that when king Ólafr Haraldsson once visited the seaports of western Norway he noted that “the people had been baptized, but that the canon law was unknown”⁴⁹ to them. This indicates that their faith was Celtic, because for centuries the Celtic Church did not recognize the canon law of the Roman Catholic Church.

The conflict between the kings of Norway and the Roman Church concerning canon law was more or less settled with the Concord (Sáttargjörðin) of 1277 at Tunsberg, Norway.⁵⁰ A major impetus for the change was provided by Knutr I. ríki (“Canute the Great”), a Danish king of England (1014–1035), Denmark (1019–1035), and Norway (1028–1035). He was a power in the politics of Europe in the eleventh century and greatly respected both by the Holy Roman Emperor and the Pope.⁵¹

In England, Canute the Great joined hands with the Anglo-Saxon Christians whose conversion to Roman Catholicism had commenced already during the sixth

⁴⁸*Íslenska alfræðiorðabókin*, 1992 ed., s.v. “Sverrir Sigurðarson.” It should be noted that “Catholic teaching regarding prayers for the dead is bound up inseparably with the doctrine of purgatory and the more general doctrine of the communion of the saints, which is an article of the Apostle's Creed. The definition of the Council of Trent (Sess. XXV), “that purgatory exists, and that the souls detained therein are helped by the suffrages of the faithful, but especially by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar,” is merely a restatement in brief of the traditional teaching which had already been embodied in more than one authoritative formula. . . . The most efficacious of all prayers, in Catholic teaching, is the essentially public office, the Sacrifice of the Mass.” See *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2009 ed., s.v. “Prayers for the Dead.”

⁴⁹Sturluson, 2:827.

⁵⁰*Aschehoug og Gyldendals Store Norske leksikon*, 1980 ed., s.v. “Norge: Kultur – Religion.”

⁵¹*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2007 ed., s.v. “Canute the Great.”

century. These proud barbarians received with favor the Roman Catholic faith which was in striking contrast to the primitive Christianity of the Celts in Britain, who, because of the resulting persecution, fled to Scotland, to the islands west and north of Britain, to Ireland, and to Iceland. Gradually, especially during the seventh and eighth centuries, the Roman Church, with the help of the Anglo-Saxons, crushed all opponents and established her dominion over most of the congregational Celtic Churches in England itself,⁵² but much later elsewhere as we shall see below.

Canute the Great made use of the Anglo-Saxons especially for his ecclesiastical conquest. As he renewed his bishopric in Denmark he used only Anglo-Saxon bishops ordained by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Reinard received Odense on Fyn, Gerbrand received Roskilde on Sjælland, and Bernhard received Skaane. According to Nissen, “the introduction of Christianity was now complete in Denmark.” Canute’s triumph was symbolized by a pilgrimage he took in 1026, during which “the Danish king appeared for the first time before the Pope and the Princes as a Christian King and his country as a Christian country, incorporated in the Christian West.”⁵³

If Roman Catholic Christianity, so fervently embraced and promulgated by Canute the Great, was the same Christianity introduced in Norway by Olafr Tryggvason and especially by Olafr Haraldsson, why did Canute the Great attack Olafr Haraldsson in 1028 and rob him of his power and his Christian accomplishments? When Olafr tried with the help of Anund Jakob to regain his kingdom and Christian position in 1030, he was defeated by a superior Norwegian and Danish army at the command of Canute the

⁵²*Íslenska alfræðiorðabókin*, 1992 ed., s.v. “Brendan”; Hardinge, 201, 203.

⁵³Nissen, 21.

Great at the Battle of Stiklestad,⁵⁴ one of the most celebrated battles in ancient Norse history. Thus it is clear that the introduction of Roman Catholic Christianity in Norway was accomplished by the political and military power of Canute the Great,⁵⁵ not by the missionary activities of Ólafr Tryggvason and Ólafr Haraldsson.

It is, therefore, only from the middle of the eleventh century, that is, after the defeat of Ólafr Haraldsson, that legislation, poems, and monuments testify to the new Roman Catholic faith.⁵⁶ King Harald Gilles (who reigned 1130-1136) was succeeded by his three sons, Inge (reigned 1136-1161), Øystein (reigned 1136-1155), and Sigurd (reigned 1142-1157). In 1152/53 these three sons of King Harald Gilles all gave their full support and royal consent to permanent establishment of a Roman Catholic archbishopric at Niðarós (now Trondheim) close to Stiklestad and Selja. This was done at the request of Nicholas Breakspeare who was in Scandinavia as a papal legate from 1152 to 1154 organizing among other things the affairs of the new Norwegian archbishopric of Niðarós as mentioned above.⁵⁷ At the same time Norway together with Iceland, Greenland, the

⁵⁴Sturluson, 3:1074-1080.

⁵⁵Nissen, 29.

⁵⁶*Aschehoug og Gyldendals Store Norske Leksikon* (Aschehoug and Gyldendal's great Norwegian encyclopedia), 1980 ed., s.v. "Norge: Kultur-Religion."

⁵⁷On his return to Rome, Nicholas was received with great honor by Pope Anastasius IV (1153–1154). After the death of Anastasius, Nicholas was elected pope on December 3, 1154, and took the name Adrian IV. He was the only Englishman ever to serve as Pope. According to the historian Edmund Curtis, Adrian IV granted the papal bull, *Laudabiliter*, after the Synod of Kells, in 1155. Edmund Curtis, *A History of Ireland from Earliest Times to 1922* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 38-39. *Laudabiliter* was a papal bull purportedly issued in 1155 by the English Pope Adrian IV, giving the English King Henry II the right to invade Ireland to reform its Church and people. It was from the Chair of St. Peter that the kings of England, from Henry II (1171) until Henry VIII (1541), derived the title *Lord of Ireland*. Later, Henry VIII became the first English king to style himself *King of Ireland*. See *Wikipedia*, 2009 ed., s.v. "Laudabiliter."

Faeroe Islands, the Orkney Islands, Outer and Inner Hebrides, and the Isle of Man was established as one see with its own Archbishop in Niðarós.⁵⁸ This ended the independent existence of the ancient Celtic Church in Norway, the British Isles, and Iceland.

During the twelfth century, the Celtic monastery of Columba on Iona (which had been rebuilt during the eleventh century) was included by the Norsemen in their diocese of the Isle of Man and other Isles. Later this see was put under the archbishop of Niðarós in Norway and retained this status until 1266 when the Hebrides were ceded to Scotland.⁵⁹ Eventually, even Columba himself was made a Roman Catholic saint.⁶⁰

Thus the Roman Catholic faith was established in Norway by the power of the sword,⁶¹ and that faith remained unchallenged in Norway until the Lutheran Reformation of the sixteenth century.

The Reformation in Denmark-Norway, 1536/1537–1797

Hans Tausen (1494-1561),⁶² a peasant's son who in 1515 became a monk of the Order of St. John at Antvorskov convent, brought the Lutheran Reformation of the sixteenth century to Denmark-Norway. Norway was at that time under the Danish crown. Tausen studied at Leuven and Cologne where he learned about Martin Luther's writings.

⁵⁸*Aschehoug og Gyldendals Store Norske Leksikon* (Aschehoug and Gyldendal's great Norwegian encyclopedia), 1980 ed., s.v. "Norge: Kultur-Religion."

⁵⁹*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2007 ed., s.v. "Iona."

⁶⁰Catholic Encyclopedia, 2007 ed., s.v. "St. Columba."

⁶¹Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Norsk kirkehistorie* (Norwegian church history), 3 vols. (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsen, 1966), 1:52.

⁶²J. L. Balling and P. G. Lindhardt, *Den nordiske kirkes historie* (The history of the Nordic church) (Copenhagen: Nyt nordisk forlag Arnold Busck, 1979), 105, 107, 111, 113, 116.

In 1523 he secretly visited the reformer Martin Luther (1483-1546) in Wittenberg, Germany, to study the Reformation doctrine. Tausen was recalled to his monastery in 1524, but because of his new doctrine he was soon expelled from his monastery, banned from the island of Sjælland, Denmark, and, in 1526, dismissed from the Order of St. John. Though King Frederik I (1523-1533) of Denmark-Norway had in his coronation charter promised to guard the faith of the Catholic Church, he issued a royal edict offering protection to Tausen and other Danish and Norwegian Lutheran teachers of the new doctrine. As Tausen and the others began to preach, the churches were opened to them, and the people thronged to listen.⁶³

Under the king's protection, Tausen was appointed chaplain in 1528 in Viborg, which by now had become the center of the Reformation in Denmark, and in 1529 he was called to preach at St. Nicolai's Church in Copenhagen. Tausen supported the translation of the New Testament into Danish, and when this NT was widely circulated in Norway, it attracted a lot of attention.⁶⁴ When Frederik I died in 1533, he was succeeded by his son Christian III, under whom the official Reformation shift of religion occurred in the joint kingdoms of Denmark-Norway in 1536-37.

As a youth, Prince Christian had grown up in Schleswig-Holstein, the part of Denmark in closest proximity to the German Reformation. In 1518 he obtained as his private tutor a German nobleman who had studied at Wittenberg. In 1521 Christian was sent for a stay with his maternal uncle, Joachim of Brandenburg, during which he

⁶³Wisløff, 1:396, 398.

⁶⁴Olaf Kortner, Preben Munthe, and Egil Tveteras, eds., *Aschehoug og Gyldendals Store Norske Leksikon*, 12 vols. (Oslo: Kunnskapsforlaget, 1978), 2:736. See also Wisløff, 1:392-394.

accompanied his uncle to the Diet of Worms where the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (1519–1558) tried to force the Reformer Martin Luther to retract his teachings. The majority of the Diet were more than ever inclined to regard Luther's cause with favor. This experience and especially Luther's words and conduct during the Diet strongly gripped Prince Christian who from now on became an ardent Lutheran.⁶⁵ Late in May 1521, Charles V signed the Edict of Worms, outlawing Luther and his followers. In spite of that, Christian's Lutheran sympathies became well known in Denmark. When Christian succeeded his father as the Duke of Schleswig-Holstein in 1523 he effectively supported the Lutheran reform in his own duchy. In 1525 he was given the fiefs of Herderslev and Toerning, where he continued to support the Reformation sponsored by the Danish nobility. Later the same year the Danish National Council, which was totally controlled by Roman Catholics, refused to allow his father King Frederik I to name him Stadholder, which would have given him automatic right to succession. The objection was apparently due to his Lutheran proclivities.⁶⁶ This was the situation when Frederick died in 1533. Soon after his father's death, Christian was plunged into the Count's War or Grevens Fejde (1534-36), the last Danish war of succession, which resulted in the strengthening of the monarchy and the establishment of Danish Lutheranism. The war derived its name from Count Christopher of Oldenburg who unsuccessfully led the forces of Lübeck against Christian III. At Christian III's coronation in 1536 he drafted his own coronation oath, a privilege formerly reserved to the National Council. Christian omitted

⁶⁵Oscar A. Jonsen, "Christian III," *Norsk Biografisk Leksikon* (Norwegian biographical encyclopedia), vol. 2 (Oslo: H. Aschehoug & Co [W Nygaard], 1925), 559.

⁶⁶Jonsen, 2:559.

from that oath any mention of the privileges of the Catholic Church.⁶⁷ Supported by the nobility, he arrested the Danish Catholic bishops and confiscated their lands and wealth. He also expropriated the lands of the monasteries, and all churches were ordered to deliver to the crown all silver treasures not necessary to conduct worship. A year later he decreed essentially the same measures for Norway.⁶⁸ On 30 October 1536 Christian III obtained popular consent to legitimize the Copenhagen Recess that declared the Danish Church reformed. Then on 2 September 1537 the king signed the Church Ordinance, which sealed the Danish Church as reformed according to the Lutheran Reformation.

The Reformation in Norway, 1536/37–1897

Norwegian historians generally view the events of 1536-1537, establishing the Lutheran Reformation in Norway, as the nadir of their nation's political and cultural history, and see this as the culmination of a direction that had become fixed by the Kalmar Union, the annexation and domination of Norway by Denmark.⁶⁹ This wounded the Norwegian soul so deeply that one of Norway's greatest poets and playwrights, Henrik Ibsen, called this era "the four-hundred year night" in his country's history. This union saw Danes in political, economic, religious, and cultural positions which led to the decay of Norway's religious and political life and national consciousness. These all finally led to the events of 1536-1537, the Reformation era.

⁶⁷Ibid., 2:561.

⁶⁸Ejvind Slottved, "Christian III," *Dansk Biografisk Leksikon* (Danish biographical encyclopedia) (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1979), 3:298-299.

⁶⁹The Kalmar Union was formed by Queen Margareth (1353–1413) who was the daughter of the late Danish king Valdemar Atterdag and the wife of the late Norwegian

The religious and national decline that preceded the Lutheran Reformation in Norway had its roots in the momentous consequences of the Black Death in 1349. This epidemic created a political vacuum by the decimation of the Norwegian nobility.⁷⁰ As a result, during the following half-century, Norway failed to maintain its power in the inter-Scandinavian politics that created the Kalmar Union. This loss of power by the Norwegian nobility greatly increased the political power of the Danish-Norwegian hierarchy and its involvement in the national council.⁷¹ The religious and national decline did not really end until Hans Nielsen Hauge arrived upon the scene and the Norwegians declared independence in 1814 from the Kalmar Union.

This development is highlighted by two documents of 1536. As already mentioned, King Christian III had openly embraced and promoted Lutheranism even before the Count's War in Denmark. In the wake of that war, he needed to replenish his war-depleted treasury. The Danish bishops' refusal to grant the sums he needed provided him occasion to accomplish many things at the same time. He imprisoned the Danish bishops, appropriated their church lands to the crown, and then induced the populace to legitimize those actions by the Copenhagen Recess of 30 October 1536—a document which also declared the Danish church “Reformed,” as already noted. On the same date the king signed a royal charter, of which paragraph III of the article on Norway vividly reveals the Danish view of Norway at that time:

King Haakon VI, in the Swedish town of Kalmar. It united the three kingdoms of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway.

⁷⁰Wisløff, 1:388.

⁷¹Karen Larsen, *A History of Norway* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1948), 202.

And since Norway's kingdom is now so impoverished both in power and wealth, and the Norwegian kingdom's inhabitants alone cannot manage to support for themselves a lord and king, and this same kingdom is moreover bound to remain with the crown of Denmark forever, and the majority of Norway's national council, especially Archbishop Olav, who now is the greatest head there in the kingdom, also has now within a short time, with the greatest part of Norway's national council, fallen away from Denmark's kingdom against their own pledge, so have we therefore promised and announced to Denmark's national council and nobility that, so far as God Almighty has foreordained that we are able to ensure or bring under our obedience that same Norwegian kingdom or any of the dependencies, castles, lands or districts that belong to it, so shall it hereafter be and remain under Denmark's crown, like one of the other lands, Jutland, Fyn, Zealand, or Skaane, and hereafter not to be called a kingdom in itself [i.e., Norway should no longer be regarded as a kingdom, but simply as another province of Denmark], but a dependency of Denmark's kingdom and under Denmark's crown forever. Moreover, if struggles arise from this, Denmark's national council and inhabitants shall be pledged with us truly to aid and execute it.⁷²

It is easy to understand why Norwegians regard this unilateral charter of October 30, 1536, as a symbol of their nation's nadir, when the Danes, without consultation from their Norwegian compatriots, declared the kingdom of Norway to be only a Danish province. The Norwegian National Council was never formally dissolved, but it ceased to meet and thus ceased to function. Hence all high-level decisions from then on were made in Copenhagen by the king and his Danish Privy National Council until the rule of royal absolutism began in 1660.

In 1536 King Christian III imprisoned the Danish Catholic bishops and the next year he imprisoned the Norwegian Catholic bishops. Then on September 2, 1537 the king signed a new Church Ordinance for Denmark and Norway and the first Lutheran superintendent or bishop, Geble Pedersson of Bergen, was installed in Norway, together

⁷²Quoted in Sverre Steen, *Det Norske Folks Liv og Historie (1500-1640)* (Life and History of the Norwegian People (1500-1640), vol. 4 (Oslo: H. Aschehoug & Co [W. Nygaard], 1935), 112.

with seven new Danish Lutheran bishops, whom Johannes Bugenhagen (1485-1558) ordained the same day at the king's request.⁷³

This ordination of the bishops by Bugenhagen was of fundamental importance. It constituted a full and formal break with the Roman Catholic Church, since Bugenhagen did not have a proper Roman Catholic ordination. Because Bugenhagen himself had never been ordained by a bishop of the Roman Catholic Church, he lacked the *successio apostolica*,⁷⁴ which rendered his own ordination invalid. Further, the Catholic Church's *intentio faciendi quo facit ecclesia*,⁷⁵ for a second reason rendered these ordinations invalid, from a Roman Catholic viewpoint. In that view, a priest who lacks the above-

⁷³Wisløff, 1:408. Bugenhagen founded a church polity for Braunschweig, Hamburg, Lübeck, Pomerania, Schleswig-Holstein, Hildesheim, Braunschweig-Wolfenbuettel, and Denmark-Norway, and personally helped with the initiation and realization of the polity in these areas. The polity not only regulated the worship services and how ministers were to be chosen democratically, but also far-reaching things such as the educational system and social matters.

⁷⁴*Successio apostolica* means apostolic succession. Apostolic succession refers to the Roman Catholic doctrine of the ordination of the priest by which the validity and authority of the priest is received by the outward sign of the laying on of hands by the Bishop. This gives the priest the physical connection with the apostle Peter who in turn was ordained by Jesus Christ himself when he laid his hands on Peter. This physical connection grants the priest the needed power and authority to perform the transubstantiation of the bread and the wine into the real body and blood of Jesus Christ. Although the bread and wine retain, on the altar, their original appearance of bread and wine, they are believed to have become a true sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins. This is confirmed by the Roman Catholic Saint and Bishop Augustine of Hippo (354-430) when he says that "the succession of priests, from the very see of the apostle Peter, to whom the Lord, after his resurrection, gave the charge of feeding his sheep [John 21:15-17]," gives the priest power and authority to perform the Sacrifice of the Mass, "without which the Roman Catholic Church would cease to exist." See Catholic Online Forum, *Against the Letter of Mani Called "The Foundation"* 4:5 [A.D. 397].

⁷⁵*Intention faciendi quod facit ecclesia* reads in English "intention to do as the Church does." According to the Roman Catholic view a priest without the right "intention or purpose" cannot perform the Sacrifice of the Mass. See Wisløff, 1:411.

mentioned qualifications cannot perform the transubstantiation of the bread and the wine, and therefore cannot offer the sacrifice of the mass⁷⁶ for the forgiveness of sins. Simply

⁷⁶That which ended the hegemony of the Roman Catholic Church was Martin Luther's *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, which rejected the theology of the Lord's Supper, the very cornerstone of the Church. Luther saw three errors in the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Lord's Supper. First, the laity was allowed to receive only the bread, whereas the priest could receive both kinds, i.e., the bread and the wine. This was unacceptable to Luther, since it did not represent the "completeness" of Christ's sacrifice for "in every sacrament the sign as such is of far less importance than the thing signified." Thus, in Luther's view, the Catholic doctrine deprived the laity of the complete sacrifice of Christ. The second error Luther saw in the Lord's Supper was the dogma of transubstantiation established at the 4th Lateran Council in 1215. Said Luther: "When I learned later what church it was that had decreed this – namely, the Church of Thomas [Aquinas], i.e., of Aristotle (the fine-spun pseudo-philosophy of substance and accidents) – I waxed bolder, and after floating in a sea of doubt, I at last found rest for my conscience in the above view (iron and fire mingled)– namely, that it is real bread and real wine, in which Christ's flesh and blood are present, not otherwise and not less real than they [Roman Catholics] assume to be the case under the accidents. I reached this conclusion because I saw that the opinions of the Thomists, though approved by pope and council, remain but opinions and do not become articles of faith, even though an angel from heaven were to decree otherwise. For what is asserted by Scripture or an approved revelation, may be held as an opinion, but not to be believed." Third, Luther said that Catholics thought "the mass is a good work and a sacrifice." He continued: "They imagine themselves to be offering up Christ Himself, as all-sufficient sacrifice, to God the father, and to be performing a good work for all whom they have intended to benefit." Luther thought that the "common belief that the mass is a sacrifice, which is offered to God" is a "stumbling-block" that is "much greater and the most dangerous of all" and therefore "must be removed." See "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church," in Kenneth A. Strand, *Reform Essentials of Luther and Calvin* (Ann Arbor, MI: Braun-Brumfield, 1971), 107-120.

In addition, according to Roman Catholic teaching, the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross could only atone for the original sin, whereas the sacrifice of the mass forgave all daily sins and even the sins of those in purgatory. Private masses were therefore performed by the priest who alone was present when the sacrifice of the mass was offered after he had changed the bread and the wine into the real flesh and blood of Christ. The private masses became a major source of income for the Church. See Ivar Engel Jensen, *Martin Luther Skrifter I Udvalg, Om kirken babyloniske fangenskab* (Martin Luther's selected Writings, about the Church's Babylonian Captivity) (Copenhagen: Credo Forlag, 1982), 157, 158.

However, the Roman Catholic Church also taught that the original sin is an ethical and religious neutral predisposition which of its own is without a sinful character. It is like powder which explodes when fire is added to it. The powder itself is, so to speak, without "sin" but when the "sinful" fire reaches the powder from outside it explodes and

put: he is no priest at all. Hence not only was Bugenhagen himself not a priest at all, but the same was therefore true of those whom he had ordained. Therefore neither Bugenhagen, nor the bishops he ordained, nor the priests they in turn ordained later, could accomplish the sacramental operation of the transubstantiation of the bread and wine, an occurrence that claims to recreate Jesus Christ on the altar and thus turn the bread and the wine into an actual Sacrifice of the Mass on the altar for forgiveness of sins. Since such a grand part of the Roman Catholic Church depended upon such a sacrament for its existence, the Roman Church deemed the Lutheran Church invalid. Since the Lord's Supper as the Sacrifice of the Mass did not exist within the Lutheran Church as it had developed in the Catholic Church, therefore all adherents of this particular Lutheran doctrine were considered damned. These different views of the Lord's Supper rendered the break complete between the Norwegian Roman Catholic Church and the emerging Lutheran Church in Norway on September 2, 1537 as stated above.⁷⁷

The Church Ordinance was worked out by reformed churchmen in Denmark including Hans Tausen; it was reviewed by Martin Luther, and finally revisited by Johannes Bugenhagen.⁷⁸ It specified seven books that all pastors were to own:

1. The Holy Bible

changes the original sin into a daily sin which the sacrifice of the mass alone can forgive, hence what did Christ himself offer himself for? See Niels Nøjgaard, Regin Prenter, E. Thestrup Pedersen, eds., 4. vols., *Luthers Skrifter i Udvalg* (Selected Writings of Luther) (Copenhagen: G. E. C. Forlag, 1962-1964), 1:416. Luther thought that "if the mass falls, the papacy falls," and so it did, because "only the death of Christ is the sacrifice of atonement." See Jens Olav Mæland, ed., *Konkordiaboken, Den evangelisk-lutherske kirkes bekjennelsesskrifter* (Book of Concord, the confessional writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church) (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1985), 204, 240, 583, 585.

⁷⁷Wisløff, 1:408.

⁷⁸Ibid.

2. Luther's Sunday sermons
3. The Augsburg Confession
4. Melancthon's *Loci Communes*
5. Luther's *Small Catechism*
6. Luther's Saxon Visitation Book of 1528
7. The 1537 Church Ordinance itself (especially for its liturgical directions for worship).

The Church Ordinance also included rules that the king would take over the former bishops' properties, the bishops' share of the tithe, and act as trustee for the parishes' share, because the Catholic bishops were now seen primarily as political representatives of Rome. At the same time the Ordinance left to their former owners the parish properties, the priests' parsonages and share of tithes, and the cathedral chapters' land. The Ordinance also made it very clear that the king was not the head bishop of the church. He was only to protect the church by making sure it had all the freedom it needed to exist and grow. Neither was he allowed to express himself concerning any doctrine. That was solely within the realm of the church whose bishops and ministers were to "preach and teach"⁷⁹ the gospel according to *sola scriptura*.⁸⁰ This was fully in agreement with Martin Luther's own understanding and view on the relationship of church and state.⁸¹ The reformer Philipp Melancthon (1497-1560) put it this way: The Prince should

⁷⁹*Pascre et docere.*

⁸⁰*Sola scriptura* ("Scripture alone") refers to the Bible as the only great principle of authority as to doctrine and ethics of the Christian Church. This principle formed the basis for the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century.

⁸¹Wisløff, 1:410.

be *custos utriusque tabulae*,⁸² the custodian and guardian of the two tables of the law⁸³ by providing the freedom the church needed and ensuring peace throughout the land. Under the protection of the king and the leadership of bishops and local ministers came the various steps by which the nation appropriated to itself the Reformation officially imposed in 1537.

But as was true in other Reformation lands, a very important aid to a genuine change in the people was their literature. A Danish New Testament translated by Christiern Pedersen, a humanist, was published from 1529. The five books of Moses translated by Tausen from 1530 and several of the other Old Testament books translated by Peder Tidemand from 1539 were also published. The complete Bible, called Christian III's, was published in 1550. Luther's *Small Catechism* was available in translation soon after its first publication in 1529 and Hans Thomisson's hymnbook came out in 1569.⁸⁴

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³It was customary from the beginning of the Christian Church to refer to the Ten Commandments of God as "the Two Tables of the Law." The first four commandments (the first table) described the duties of man towards God. The second table contained the six remaining commandments describing how men were to treat one another. The duty of the king was to ensure stability in the society so that the church could exercise freely her duty according to the gospel and the "first table," without the least interference of the king. At the same time he was to maintain order in the society in accordance with the "second table" without the interference of the church. Thus the state had no authority over the church and vice versa. This separation of church and state or the "two regiments," strongly advocated by both Melancthon and Luther, rejected the Roman Catholic understanding of the order of society. See Niels Nøjgaard, Regin Prenter, and E. Thestrup Pedersen, eds., *Luthers Skrifter i Udvalg* (Selected Writings of Luther), 4 vols. (Copenhagen: G.E.C. Forlag, 1962-1964), 1:416; 4:29.

⁸⁴ Wisløff, 1:396; Balling, 116, 117; Kristen Valkner, *Norges Kirkehistorie* (Church History of Norway), 1500-1800 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1959), 24.

These three witnesses—the Bible, the *Small Catechism*, and the hymnbook—were the real missionaries to the people in general. But in spite of that there was a considerable lapse into immoral deportment by both clergy and laity alike. In 1564 Peder Tidemand wrote: “Therefore we also see that all sins multiply and have now for the last forty-three years, since the gospel came to Denmark, reached their highest level, yes much more than they ever were in ancient times.”⁸⁵ Because of this, there are those who maintain that the real Protestant Reformation did not come about until the time of Hans Nielsen Hauge when the people of Norway could freely, according to their own conscience, choose what they wanted to believe or whom they wanted to serve without the involvement of governmental authority.⁸⁶

Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771-1824)

Hauge’s life story may be divided into four main parts:⁸⁷

1. From 1771 to 1796, his early home life was especially characterized by pietistic Christianity and enterprise.
2. From 1796 to 1804, he traveled around Norway as a lay preacher, wrote religious books and took the initiative for better moral and social conditions.
3. From 1804 to 1814, he was imprisoned for most of the time while his case was examined. His final judgment and release came on December 23, 1814.

⁸⁵Quoted in Balling, 123.

⁸⁶Claes Nyegaard, *100 Viktige Bøker* (100 important books) (Oslo: Lie & Co.s Boktrykkeri A.s., 1984), 8.

⁸⁷Andreas Aarflot, *Norsk kirkehistorie* (Norwegian church history), 3 vols. (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsen, 1967), 2:236.

4. From 1814 to 1824, he farmed, first at Bakkehaugen and then at Bredtveit.

Hauge's Impact on Norwegian History

Hans Nielsen Hauge lived at a time when an absolute monarch still ruled Denmark-Norway, and when the priests of the state church were greatly influenced by the rationalism of philosophers who sought to apply the rules of reason and common sense to nearly all the major institutions and social practices of the day. Some of the philosophers went so far with their new faith in the capacity of humankind that they thought that man could improve himself without the aid of God.⁸⁸

Peter Gay has pointed out that the men of the Enlightenment were never an organized group and that they disagreed on many things, yet they had a certain unity, just as within a family, where in spite of disagreements, quarrels, and tensions, there remains a certain unity. According to Gay, that unity was their shared confidence in the power of reason and the senses.⁸⁹ Hans Nielsen Hauge, who taught that reason and senses must be fully submitted to the Bible⁹⁰ as the revealed and authentic word of God, totally rejected this notion of the Enlightenment. During Hauge's time Norway formed its own constitution and government (May 17, 1814) which liberated Norway from the union with Denmark which had dominated Norway's history in every way since the cluster of events culminating in the Kalmar Union of 1397.

⁸⁸Donald Kagan, Steven Ozment, and Frank M. Turner, *The Western Heritage*, 3rd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 597-599.

⁸⁹Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, 2 vols. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), 1:3, 4.

⁹⁰Andreas Aarflot, *Hans Nielsen Hauge Liv og Budskap* (Hans Nielsen Hauge's Life and Message) (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1971), 73, 102-109.

Therefore May 17, 1814, was indeed the day of the rebirth of the Norwegian nation. As Ottar Dahl says, “the political event of this year [1814] started something decisively new in our people’s whole life.”⁹¹ A significant internal stimulus to the outburst of freedom at this time was the establishment in 1811 of the University of Norway, now the University of Oslo. Permission to form this university was granted by King Frederik VI (1808-1839) in response to a long-standing Norwegian demand.

Already in 1807 the Independent Theological Faculty, *Menighets-fakultetet*, had been established in Oslo. The independent faculty was formed by a large conservative orthodox party which rebelled against the joint University of Copenhagen’s more liberal theological faculty, but remained within the state Lutheran church. It was soon recognized by the state, and gradually came to educate most of the clergy for the state church. It is not merely coincidence that Norwegian independence came near the close of Hauge’s ten years of intermittent imprisonment. Both the University in Oslo and the Norwegian independence from Denmark resulted directly and indirectly from Hauge’s instrumentality. Hauge’s reform movement was not only the most remarkable religious reformation ever known in Norway, but of pivotal importance for social and political changes as well.

Hauge’s Life from Infancy to Manhood (1771-1796)

Hans Nielsen Hauge was born on April 3, 1771, on the Hauge farm at Rolfsjoen in the Tune parish of Østfold about fifty miles from Oslo. His parents were Niels Mikkelsen from Evenrod i Glemmen parish and Maria Olsdatter from Hauge. They were

⁹¹Ottar Dahl, *Norsk Historieforskning i 19. og 20. Århundre* (Norwegian historical Research in the 19th and 20th Centuries) (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1962), 2.

of simple piety, cherishing the internal religion of the heart and the spirit above any external observances. They regarded no outward form of worship, however beautiful, as an effective safeguard of the principle of inward faith and worship.⁹² Hauge had little formal education, but was a skilled carpenter and repairman, and was thus economically independent and secure. As a young man he did much religious reading, studying, and praying but it deeply worried him that he “would not be saved.”⁹³

During Hans Nielsen Hauge's childhood and adolescence, his home and family were strongly influenced by the literary works of Martin Luther,⁹⁴ especially his Postill or large collection of sermons.⁹⁵ The pietism of Johann Arndt (1555–1621) was also greatly appreciated in Hauge's home.⁹⁶ Arndt was a German pastor who cared for many parishes before he became the bishop of Celle. As an author he wrote many edifying Lutheran books that emphasized the “pectoral” or “heart theology” that especially characterized early Pietism, and found its highest expression and widest audience in his writings that were published from 1607 to 1609. Some call him the “father of Pietism.” Arndt's chief work, *Six Books on True Christianity*, was read in Hauge's home as well as in countless homes throughout Europe.⁹⁷ In these books Arndt stressed the notion of a living faith in

⁹²Aarflot, 2:233.

⁹³ Hans H. Ording, ed., *Hans Nielsen Hages Skrifter* (the Writing of Hans Nielsen Hauge), 8 vols. (Oslo: Andaktsbokselskapet, 1947), 6:122.

⁹⁴See Aarflot, 2:236; Ording, *Hans Nielsen Hauge*, 1:100.

⁹⁵Ording, *Hans Nielsen Hauge*, 1:25, 30, 63, 66, 77, 90.

⁹⁶Ording, *Hans Nielsen Hauge*, 1:100.

⁹⁷A. Chr. Bang, *Hans Nielsen Hauge og hans Samtid* (Hans Nielsen Hauge and his own Times), 4th ed. (Kristiania: J. W. Cappelens Forlag, 1910), 484, 485.

the atonement of Jesus Christ, resulting in repentance, regeneration, and a new life in the Holy Spirit. This became the essence of pietism.

Johann Arndt himself put it very well when he said that,

Not the Christian name, but the Christian life, shews [*sic*] a true Christian: let this therefore be the care of a true Christian, that in him Christ may be manifested, and made visible to others, by charity, humility, and benignity of nature. In whom Christ lives not, he, of consequence, is not a Christian. And this life having fixed its roots within, the very spirit and heart of a man must spring from this inward principle, as an apple from the internal virtue of the tree. Yea, it is necessary [that] our life should be directed by the Spirit of Christ, and fashioned after his example.⁹⁸

The Hagues also read books by the Danish Pietist theologian Erik Pontoppidan the Younger (1698-1764).⁹⁹ Pontoppidan was a court preacher in Copenhagen who later became the bishop of Bjørgvin (1747–54) in Norway. His book *Truth Unto Godliness* (1737), a commentary on Martin Luther's catechism, combined law and gospel, orthodoxy and pietism in a very balanced way.¹⁰⁰ The book was a national reader for many generations in Norway. Through these theological and devotional books and hymns, Hauge learned Lutheran Protestant Christianity and how to apply it not only intellectually but to his practical life.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸John Arndt, *True Christianity: Or the Whole Economy of God Towards Man and the Whole Duty of Man towards God*, Book I, trans., Anthony William Boehm (Boston: Lincoln & Edmands, 1809), 185.

⁹⁹Aarflot, 2:236; Ording, *Hans Nielsen Hauge*, 1:100.

¹⁰⁰Erik Pontoppidan the Younger, *Sandhed til Gudfrygtighed* (Truth leading to Fare of God) (Copenhagen: det Kongelige Waysenhues Bogtrykkerie og Forlag, 1737); Aarflot, 2:236.

¹⁰¹A. Chr. Bang, *Hans Nielsen Hauge*, 484, 485.

At the time of Hauge's birth, however, pietism in Norway was primarily under late Moravian influence.¹⁰² The Moravians' spiritual ancestors were the *Unitas Fratrum* (United Brethren) which absorbed much that was most vital in the Hussite movement. These German-speaking Protestants in the province of Moravia had sought a refuge in Saxony because of persecution after the Thirty Years' War. The pietist Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf and Pottendorf (1700–60) allowed them to found, on his Berthelsdorf estate, a village they named Herrnhut. The Moravian Church established there remained small, yet its willingness to go anywhere to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ gave a noble missionary development to their movement. Herrnhut thus became a wellspring of missionary activity that spread Moravian influence through the entire Protestant territory of Europe, including both towns and rural districts in Norway.¹⁰³

Because the Moravians were seldom permitted to preach their version of Christian conversion and practical piety in the state churches, they preached mostly in private homes or open fields. Hundreds of people responded to their message of repentance and good works and felt assured of their own salvation, not because of their own merits, but because of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. Thus the fruit of salvation became the essence of their message. The core of the preaching of the Moravian Brethren lay in their stress on inward, heartfelt religion and the possibility of Christian perfection in this life.

¹⁰²Ording, *Hans Nielsen Hauge*, 1:10.

¹⁰³Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), 450-454.

Pietism was not just a reaction to the evils of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), but especially to the so-called dead scholastic Lutheran orthodoxy,¹⁰⁴ and to Enlightenment rationalism which arose in the seventeenth century. Enlightenment rationalism may be said to have climaxed in 1789 with the French Revolution, which it helped to bring about, but the influence of Enlightenment rationalism continued to shape European thought for centuries after the Revolution. Pietism was also a reaction to the Romantic Movement (ca. 1750-1870) which was characterized by the reliance on imagination, rational subjectivity, and an emphasis on the emotional appreciation of all things medieval, all of which tended to reinforce the sacerdotal views of the established clergy of the state churches.

Hauge reacted emphatically to all the things mentioned above, and especially against the main representatives of these movements, namely, the rationalistic and sacerdotal priests of the Norwegian Lutheran State Church, government officials, and institutions of higher learning. In addition Hauge reacted to the later version of pietism as it was represented in Norway by his own vicar Gerhard Seeberg and his Moravian Brethren.

The vicar Gerhard Seeberg (1734-1813) came to Hauge's district in 1778.¹⁰⁵ Born in Tønsberg, Norway, which had experienced a strong revival from the middle of

¹⁰⁴The "dead orthodoxy" was characterized by fixed intellectual and dogmatic conformity. Faith thus consisted in mere acceptance of a corpus of dogma. The church member's role was largely passive. Simply to listen to the exposition of the assured pure dogmas from the pulpit and partake of the sacraments were the practical sum of the Christian life.

¹⁰⁵Aarflot, 2:233. It should be noted that Seeberg was in no way a typical representative of the Moravian Herrnhut Brethren. He was rather the exception.

the 1730s, Seeberg was himself an adherent of the Moravian Herrnhut Brethren.¹⁰⁶ To Tune parish he brought with him a considerable library to which Hauge had free access. Seeberg soon became very fond of the gifted young Hauge and gave him his full attention. However, Seeberg's limited emphasis on the practical sanctification of the Christians' mind and heart displeased Hauge so much that he found himself compelled to oppose his teacher most strongly.¹⁰⁷ At this time Seeberg still believed in the theological peculiarities that Zinzendorf and some Moravians had developed. Their morbid utterances and puerility of expressions about Jesus' wounds and blood had been at the height of their manifestation between 1747 and 1749. Yet, Seeberg was still greatly influenced by Zinzendorf's fanciful and sentimental peculiarities, which by this time Zinzendorf had turned away from.¹⁰⁸

A closer look reveals that Seeberg did not really believe in true sanctification of loving care for one's neighbor. He most likely never fully understood the "heart-religion" fostered by the early Herrnhuters. He preferred what may be called rather rough and brutal legalistic church discipline as will be seen later. He thought himself too wise to need any instruction, and too righteous to need any correction. He was so hardhearted that he would use the most trivial excuse to take people to court or throw a widow out of her room if she did not always pay him her rent on time. He even spied on sleeping wives alone at home to see if they were sleeping with somebody else while their husbands were away. If a wife was found guilty she was immediately fined or

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 2:233.

¹⁰⁷Ording, *Hans Nielsen Hauge*, 1:10.

¹⁰⁸Walker, 453.

imprisoned. He forced old people to kneel during prayer. If he needed money, which he always did, he made his parishioners pay in order to obtain his permission to receive holy communion. But there were those who could not pay. Therefore on one Sunday in 1783, seventy church members in his parish were denied holy communion. And before his parishioners could participate in the Lord's Supper they had to come to Seeberg and confess their sins. He then asked them detailed questions about their most private and intimate relationships. Seeberg's religion included no respect for the privacy of the individual, nor any element of true selfless love. He was satisfied with a legal religion of his own creation. Consequently, he was deprived of his office as a parish priest on November 11, 1795.¹⁰⁹

Because of Hauge's understanding of Martin Luther's salvation by faith and Johann Arndt's and Eric Pontoppidan's writings on loving and loveable pietism, he thought that Seeberg's and the Moravian Brethren's interpretation of the gospel was far too one-sided, with its relentless emphasis on justification alone for salvation without fruit. Hauge emphasized the regeneration of man by the Holy Spirit according to the ethical standard of the Ten Commandments as the fruit of faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ. To a greater degree than most other teachers of his time, he emphasized the demand for the keeping of the Ten Commandments.¹¹⁰ This was the warrant for criticisms of Hauge's extensive and persistent criticisms of both Seeberg and the state

¹⁰⁹ A. Chr. Bang, *Hans Nielsen Hauge*, 15-19, 20, 21, 41-47, 67, 90, 339; Dag Kullerud, *Hans Nielsen Hauge, Mannen som vekket Norge* (Hans Nielsen Hauge, the Man who revived Norway) (Oslo: Aschhoug, 1996), 57, 59-66.

¹¹⁰ Aarflot, *Hans Nielsen Hauge Liv og budskap*, 93-101.

church.¹¹¹ Hauge took Luther as his role model and affirmed: “Praise be to the Lord that we have the teachings of Luther which are literally plain and pure when one follows them.”¹¹²

At this time Hauge wavered for a while in his purpose to give himself wholeheartedly to the Lord, because his faith had grown dim, and hope had well-nigh ceased to illuminate his mind. He had many bad dreams. Death was a dread destiny beyond which was uncertainty and gloom. Sometimes he fell on his knees and prayed to the almighty God for peace of mind. He longed to be established on the spiritual rock Jesus Christ.

The Preaching and Writing Years (1796-1804)

The soul-changing day in Hauge's life was April 5, 1796. Returning to his parents' farm from Fredrikstad, he now approached God with greater seriousness and gravity as he quietly performed his duties at the farm. As he was “working under the open sky,” and singing from memory the hymn “Jesus, to taste your sweet communion,” he sang the second stanza:

¹¹¹In order to understand better Hauge's grave and massive reaction to the later form of pietism of the Moravian Brethren the following example will suffice. Zinzendorf had formulated the slogan that came to be of great importance in the history of the Moravians and some others: “Come as you are. It is only necessary to believe in the atonement of Christ.” This then was understood by many that demand for penitential remorse as a mark of “heart religion” or conversion and piety was not necessary for salvation. This was prevalent at the time of Hauge. According to a diary of Dean Dr. Holmboe, a Herrnhut student, Niels Hichmann, had to flee from Kristiania to Copenhagen because he had seduced four humble girls and “preached emphatically against the law, order and duties” in assemblies. Vicar Green wanted even to employ him as a curate. A. Chr. Bang, *Hans Nielsen Hauge*, 137.

¹¹²Steinar Thorvaldsen, *Visjon* (Vision), nr. 1, 1996, 16.

Strengthen me strongly in my soul internally,
 So that I may feel what the Spirit can do,
 Capture both my speech and my mind,
 Lead me and allure me because my walk is weak.
 Myself and what is mine I would happily lose,
 When you alone can abide in my soul
 And move gently and softly at length to my door
 Whatever interrupts my heartfelt peace.¹¹³

Hauge described his experience:

Now my mind was so exalted in God that I was not aware of myself, nor can I express, what took place in my soul. For I was beside myself. As soon as I came to my senses, I was filled with regret that I had not served the loving and exceedingly good God, and it seemed to me that nothing in this world was worthy of any regard. That my soul felt something preternatural, divine, and blessed; that there was that glory which no tongue could utter, I vividly remember that day, as if it had happened a few days ago. . . . I know that everything good in my spirit which came out of that moment, especially the internal love to God and my neighbour, that I had a totally changed mind, a sorrow for all sins, a desire that humans should share with me the same grace; special desire to read the Holy Scriptures, especially Jesus' own teachings, yet new light in order to understand it, and combine all the teachings of all God's men with only one goal in mind, that Christ has come to be our Saviour, that we should be born again by his Spirit, be converted, become more and more holy according to the character of God in order to serve the triune God alone, in order to refine and prepare our soul for the eternal bliss.¹¹⁴

Hauge's faith in Jesus Christ was then established, and he had reached the place where he could say, "I know in whom I have believed." Hauge wrote that he saw how the world was under the spell of evil, and how it saddened him. He then asked God to delay his

¹¹³Ording, *Hans Nielsen Hauge*, 6:126. See "Jesu, din søde forening at smage." Below is the Norwegian original of the hymn:

Styrk mig ret kraftig i sjelen derinde,
 At jeg kan finde, hva aanden formaar,
 Tag mig til fange i tale og sinde,
 Led mig og lok mig, saa svag som jeg gaar.
 Mig og hvad mit er jeg gjerne vil miste
 Og sig omsider paa doren mon liste,
 Naar du alene i sjelen kan bo,
 Hvad som forstyrrer min inderlig' ro.

¹¹⁴Ibid., 6:126, 127.

judgments, so that some might repent. Since Hauge wanted more than ever before to serve God, he asked him what he wanted him to do. “It resounded within me,” said Hauge, “you shall confess my name before the people, encourage them to repent and seek me while I am to be found, call upon me while I am near and am touching their hearts, so that they may turn away from darkness to light.”¹¹⁵ This is the typical language of conversion. Hauge’s later years gave abundant evidence of the genuineness of his Christian experience.

As Hauge “pondered these things in his heart,” he understood more and more clearly the meaning of his call. His call had come through the will of God. The greatness of the work before him would lead him to give much study to the Holy Scriptures, that he might preach the gospel in demonstration of the Holy Spirit and the power of God’s word.

The experience filled him with certainty that he had a call to witness to others. He began that same day. He talked with his own family about repentance and the remission of sin through the merits of Jesus their Saviour. He says: “The first ones I talked with were my sisters and brothers. It had the effect that two of them experienced change of mind the same day.”¹¹⁶ Then he went to those who lived close by, then to the nearest village, and then to the neighboring villages. In 1797 he began to travel more extensively in Norway.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 6:127.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 6:108-148.

The thousands of kilometers ahead would be toilsome and lonesome at times.¹¹⁷ Hauge would encounter hardships and privations, and was beset with dangers on every side. He knew this beforehand from his reading of the New Testament and the writings of Martin Luther.¹¹⁸ In towns and especially the countryside through which he passed, and along the lonely highways, he would be surrounded by dangers seen and unseen. But he had learned to trust in God's power to deliver. His heart was filled with fervent love for perishing souls. As a faithful shepherd in search of his lost sheep, he gave no thought to his own ease and convenience. Forgetful of self, he faltered not when weary, hungry, and cold. He had in view but one object: the salvation of those who had wandered far from the fold.¹¹⁹ Hauge's meetings conflicted with the current Lutheran State Church understanding of the pastor's office as expressed in the Conventicle Act of January 13, 1741. Its purpose had been to bring the Moravian pietistic lay meetings under the control of the state. The pastor was therefore to be informed beforehand and preferably to be at every lay meeting to ensure that the preaching was not sectarian or an attack on the spiritual or secular authorities of the state. But Hauge was deterred neither by the Conventicle Act nor by the limited freedom of the press of September 27, 1799.¹²⁰

Late in 1797 he was arrested for the first time in accordance with the Article while he was holding a meeting in Glemmen, his father's former parish. From that time on, until the fall of 1804, he was imprisoned ten times. During these years, he traveled

¹¹⁷Thorvaldsen, 1:15.

¹¹⁸Aarflot, 2:242.

¹¹⁹Ording, *Hans Nielsen Hauge*, 1:61-64.

¹²⁰Thorvaldsen, 1:16.

over the greater part of the country, often on foot, holding meetings and winning converts so effectively that we can speak of this as the first Norwegian folk movement. It certainly demonstrates the sensational impact of this self-taught peasant son's writings upon the Norway of his day. He traveled extensively for the next eight years, especially in rural Norway where 90 percent of the population (about 900,000 people) lived. His longest single journey lasted for fifteen months, during which he traveled about 7,000 kilometers, mostly on foot.¹²¹

During his life he wrote about seventeen books, totaling an estimated 200,000 to 250,000 copies, making Hauge by far the most-read author in Norway at that time. It is estimated that about 100,000 people read his books during the first four years of his preaching.¹²² Because of his preaching and writing, Bible teaching was set free from the rationalistic interpretations of the state church and given back to the people, igniting the greatest religious revival Norwegians had experienced in almost 300 years.¹²³

Hauge's followers, known as the *Haugianere* in Norway and Haugians in English, became an enduring pietistic movement within the Norwegian State Church. They were also referred to as the "holy ones," and were led by lay preachers called "readers." Hans Nielsen Hauge has been characterized as the most important person in Norwegian Church life since the Reformation in Norway of 1536-37.¹²⁴ He may be considered the forerunner of the Second Advent Movement in Norway because his emphasis on piety and true

¹²¹Ibid., 1:16.

¹²² Ibid., 2:20; Kullerud, 337; Thorvaldsen, 1:16.

¹²³Ording, *Hans Nielsen Hauge*, 6:108-148.

¹²⁴Nyegaard, 8.

Christian living prepared the way for that movement, although he did not emphasize the Second Coming as such.

Central to Hauge's theology was his view of "living faith," which is demonstrated best by the believer whose life follows Christ as his Master and Example. The believer also has a burning desire to lead others to Christ. Faith also seeks fellowship with other believers. The believer's faith results especially in an active and unconditional obedience to the calling and the will of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. According to Ording, because of the ethically binding results of the atonement, Hauge never preached salvation "by faith alone," but he did preach salvation by "grace alone."¹²⁵ This then is the core of Hauge's Christian understanding.

A. Ch. Bang in his biography¹²⁶ points out that Hauge knew the celebrated German Lutheran biblical scholar Johann Albrecht Bengel's (1687-1752) Commentary on the Book of Revelation, *Erklärte Offenbarung Johannis*.¹²⁷ However, it seems that the prophecies of the Revelation never unfolded to his understanding. When Hauge himself commented on the book of Revelation, his emphasis was typically on grace and sanctification.¹²⁸

Despite this unprecedented spiritual revival, Hauge did not directly herald the Second Advent. Yet he had well prepared the soil of Norwegian Christianity. Because of

¹²⁵Ording, *Hans Nielsen Hauge*, 1:48-53.

¹²⁶A. Chr. Bang, *Hans Nielsen Hauge*, 132.

¹²⁷Ording, *Hans Nielsen Hauge*, 1:224-233; see also A. Chr. Bang, *Hans Nielsen Hauge*, 132, and Johann Albrecht Bengel, *Uppbyggeligä Tal Öfver Johannis eller fastmer Jesu Christi Uppenbarelse* (Edifying Exposition of John's or rather Jesus Christ's Revelation) (Götheborg: Samuel Norber, 1841 [original edition 1797]).

¹²⁸Ording, *Hans Nielsen Hauge*, 1:224-233.

Hauge's work, the Second Advent Movement which came decades later to Norway did not have to start at the very foundation of Christianity. Into the soil that Hauge had prepared, another revival in the late 1840s cast the tiny seed that grew into the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway.

Hauge's Prison Years (1804-1814)

After eight years of writing and preaching activities, and nine short periods of imprisonment,¹²⁹ Hauge was officially marked as an enemy of the state by bishop Peder Hansen in a letter of April 24, 1804 to the Danish-Norwegian Chancellery in Copenhagen.¹³⁰ The letter, void of judicial arguments, accused him, among several things, of leading people astray and awakening mistrust of the state's laws. Copenhagen had been following Hauge's work with rising discomfort for some time. With the bishop's letter the case against him began. That same year an order for his arrest signed by Fredrik Julius Kaas¹³¹ and others was issued October 30, 1804.¹³²

At that time Fredrik Julius Kaas¹³³ who presided over the Chancellery was the most competent lawyer regarding the Haugian Movement and the Conventicle Act. He brought a lawsuit against Hauge in order to stop his movement. While Kaas was still gathering evidence, Hauge was arrested by Sergeant Jens Gram at Eiker, October 24,

¹²⁹Hauge's first imprisonment was in 1797, second in 1798, and again in 1798, 1799, 1799, twice in 1800, then again in 1801, 1802, and 1804. See A. Chr. Bang, *Hans Nielsen Hagues*, 125, 135, 136, 164, 209, 215, 230, 239, 285, 226.

¹³⁰Kullerud, 259.

¹³¹Aarflot, 2:245.

¹³²Ibid., 2:262, 263.

¹³³Ibid.

1804,¹³⁴ on a charge of loitering. Gram had seen Hauge take a stroll that day, but no arrest warrant had yet been issued by the Chancellery.¹³⁵ By the time the warrant arrived, some days later, Hauge had already been locked up in Hokksund jailhouse on the order of Sheriff Jonas Collett.¹³⁶ In November of the same year, Hauge was interrogated by Thomas Stockfleth,¹³⁷ the circuit judge of Eiker, Modum, and Sigdal. He ordered Hauge to lay down his writing and preaching activities on the basis of the Conventicle Act, had Hauge's writings confiscated and prohibited according to the Freedom of the Press Law, and also accused Hauge of breaking the Trade Law and the Tramp Law.¹³⁸

During hearings as the investigation continued for the next ten years, Hauge was repeatedly cajoled or threatened to reject "the Word of God."¹³⁹ He responded: "If I had 100 lives, I would willingly submit them all to be bound in iron chains. Yes, I am threatened with long-term imprisonment and the executioner, but the prison will not last for ever and Death as the executioner comes once to us all, and, after that the judgment."¹⁴⁰ The lawsuit against Hauge was one of the most comprehensive in the

¹³⁴A. Chr. Bang, 326, 387.

¹³⁵Kullerud, 274.

¹³⁶A. Chr. Bang, 326.

¹³⁷Ibid., 387.

¹³⁸Aarflot, 2:246.

¹³⁹Letter from Hans Nielsen Hauge to Olle Alek, November 2, 1804, from Hokksund prison, quoted in Ingolf Kvamen, ed., *Brev fra Hans Nielsen Hauge* (Letters from Hans Nielsen Hauge), 4 vols. (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsens Forlag, 1971), 1:302.

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

history of Norway. More than 600 witnesses testified.¹⁴¹ The trial became a scandal even by the standards of that time. On Christmas Eve 1814 Hauge was released.

Although acquitted of all charges against him, and released from all penalties except for a fine of 1,000 riksdaler, some of his enemies and some of the bishops still called for his death. These are the exact words of the final sentencing: (1) “that Hans Nielsen Hauge had traveled throughout the country and spoken God’s Word even in spite of the Conventicle Act of January 13, 1741,” (2) “that he had encouraged others to do the same,” and (3) “that he in his writings had expressed rude words of abuse against the clergy, which were supposedly not based on evil intentions, and when read in their context were not so offensive as they may have seemed at first glance, and may have looked like [when] taken out of their context.”¹⁴² The day he was released he wrote in a letter to his friends: “I praise and thank the Lord, exalt and declare his holy name, because of his unutterable mercy.” He continues in his letter: “Today I was acquitted of all guilt by Høyeste-Rett [the Supreme Court of Norway]. Only for my pious speeches and because I was not careful enough in choosing my expressions in my books, I was fined 1000 Rbdr.”

Hauge’s Last Years (1814-1824)

After Hauge was set free he lived at Bakkehaugen. On January 27, 1815 he married Andrea Andersdatter Nyhus from Nes in Romerike, but on December 12, 1815,

¹⁴¹Letter from Hans Nielsen Hauge, of December 23, 1814, Bekkehaugen, quoted in Ingolf Kvamen, ed., *Brev fra Hans Nielsen Hauge* (Letters from Hans Nielsen Hauge), 4 vols. (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsens Forlag, 1971), 2:88.

¹⁴²Jacob B. Bull, *Hans Nielsen Hauge* (Kristiania: Steenske bogtrykkeri og Forlag, 1908), 370, 371.

she died, seven days after giving birth to their son Andreas.¹⁴³

In 1817 Hauge bought Bredtveit farm in Aker, and on January 22, married Ingeborg Marie Olsdatter. To that union were born three children. Two died before their father's death and the third some time after his death. Hauge died March 29, 1824, at the age of 53, totally worn out and broken in health.¹⁴⁴ Some of his last words were: "Follow Jesus," "O Thou eternal, loving God!"¹⁴⁵ Then he and his wife repeated together the words of the Lord's Prayer. That is how his life ended.¹⁴⁶ Halvdan Kohts summed up the effect of Hauge's influence to elevate the lives of Norwegian peasants.

The new religious life established new relationships, both spiritual and social. And the Hauge movement promoted the great actions which carried the people a long way towards spiritual independence. It taught the people to think for themselves concerning devotional questions, and not just follow what the priests said. It thus laid a new foundation for the Norwegian rising of the people. Because the teaching of the clergy had been one of the leading official activities, and when the people disengaged themselves from it, it was a great loss for the entire governmental authority. . . . The truth is that he was about to establish a power which was becoming dangerous to all upper-class interests, both the privileges of the bourgeois and the public officeholders.¹⁴⁷

Some of Hauge's friends became members of the Norwegian Parliament. They together with Hauge's relatives, after his death, fought to get rid of the Conventicle Act of 1741, and in 1842 it was repealed, thus opening the way for total religious freedom in Norway. Meanwhile, Norwegians immigrating to the United States brought Hauge's

¹⁴³A. Chr. Bang, 425.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., 426.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., 430.

¹⁴⁶Bull, *Hans Nielsen Hauge*, 385, 386.

¹⁴⁷Halvdan Kohts, *Norsk bondereisning* (Norwegian Peasants' Rising) (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1926), 31.

teachings and Pietist ideas with them and thus influenced Lutheranism in the New World.

Hans Nielsen Hauge laid an old foundation anew by allowing the Bible to speak for itself. This carried many towards spiritual and devotional independence. He also taught the people to think for themselves and disengage themselves from the clergy. This outlook resulted in the momentous decision made by the families mentioned above concerning whether or not to keep the seventh-day as the Sabbath of the Lord. Hauge had been active in their area for a long time. Although his time in prison broke his health and led to his premature death in 1824, his influence lived on through his many books. It is estimated that 100,000 Norwegians read one or more of them, at a time when the total population consisted of more or less 900,000 literate individuals. Thus he gave a lasting voice to ordinary people.

Introduction of Sabbath-keeping Christianity in Norway, 1839-1850

Seven Families Change Their Beliefs

From 1839 until 1850 seven families in Finland, and Vågsbygd in Southern Norway, experienced a religious revival in their local communities which resulted in a new Christian faith among them, characterized by firm belief in the Bible as the word of God and the seventh-day Sabbath as the right day of worship. One of these families even declined to have their youngest child baptized, which according to the State Church would result in eternal damnation and death. Because of this new-found faith they eventually had to emigrate to the United States of America. Before looking closely at their new religious experience, I will introduce the seven families.

The Family of Ola Sørensen Øvland¹⁴⁸

Ola Sørensen Øvland was born in 1786 and was married to Asborg Bertorsdotter Øvland (1780-1844).¹⁴⁹ In 1808 Ola, age 22, and his wife, 28, took charge of the Øvland farm. Thirty years later, because of “diminishing physical strength” and “increased expenses” he and his wife deeded the farm to their oldest son Søren and his wife Gunvor Tomasdotter Haugland.¹⁵⁰ The children of this union were: Søren (b. 1813), Bertor (b. 1815), Anders (1818-1834), Berte (1821-1822), Berte (b. 1823), Ola (1827-1827), and Todne, who was baptized as an infant, May 23, 1831. Ola immigrated to the United States of America in the early spring of 1849 at the age of 63. He was then a widower. Todne travelled with him, because she was the only one of his children still unmarried. The others had already established their own families, and will be mentioned below.

According to the *Kirkebøker* (Church record books), Ola and his daughter Todne were written out of their Parish in Norway, March 7, 1849,¹⁵¹ and soon left for the New World, or the Land of Rich Promises as some called the United States of America at that time.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸See p. 1, n. 1, and Appendix D.

¹⁴⁹Kirsten Lauvslund, *Finsland–I Aett og gard* (Finsland County lineage and farm) (Finsland: Finsland Sogelag, 1959), 65.

¹⁵⁰The deed was written November 29, 1838 and registered February 8, 1839. *Mandal Sorenskriveri* (District Stipendiary Magistrate Records for Mandal): Pantereg (Deed Registration) Nr. 29 – Finslandfol. 33; Referred to in *Pantebok* (Book of Deeds) nr. 12, fol. 63, Statsarkivet i Kristiansand S.

¹⁵¹*Kirkebøker – Finsland A-2 1816-1869*, 580-582.

¹⁵²Odd S. Lovoll, *Det løfterike landet* (The Land of Rich Promise) (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1983), 14-35. It is not known whether they left from Kristiansand S. or Stavanger, due to lack of departure documents. They may have left from Stavanger since all Departure Records in Stavanger for that spring were kept in the Police Station,

The Family of Søren Olson Øvland

Søren Olson Øvland, son of the above mentioned Ola Sørensen Øvland and Asborg Bertorsdotter Øvland (b. 1816), married Gunvor Tomasdotter Haugland in 1839. They lived at the Øvland farm until 1849 when Søren sold it on April 20 to his brother-in-law Anders Olson and Anders' brother Halvor.¹⁵³

Søren Olson Øvland's children were: Ole (b. 1840), Anna (b. 1844), Asborg (b. 1846), and Tomas (b. 1849). In the spring of 1849, Søren Olson Øvland immigrated with his father and his family to the United States of America, where he changed his name to Søren Loe.

The Family of Bertor Olson Øvland

Bertor Olson Øvland was also a son of Ola Sørensen Øvland and Asborg Bertorsdotter Øvland. He married the widow Kristi Andersdotter in 1840 and they went with his father to the USA in the spring of 1849.¹⁵⁴

The Family of Tarald Jensen Fiskaa

Tarald Jensen Fiskaa (Tarel Fiskaa Johnson) was born at Fiskaa in 1806. His exact date of birth is not known, but he was baptized in Oddernes Church in May 1806. His parents were Jens Endresen and Gunvor Johnsdotter Sodal, who were married in 1791. A year after Tarald's birth his parents bought half of the Fiskaa farm. They had

which was destroyed by fire in 1929, and the extant records from Kristiansand S. do not mention them.

¹⁵³Mandal Sorenskriveri: Pantereg, nr. 29 – Finsland, fol. 33; Referred to in *Pantebok* nr. 14, fol. 209, Statsarkivet i Kristiansand S. The deed was registered September 17, 1849.

¹⁵⁴Lauvsland, 65.

nine children altogether of whom Tarald was the youngest. In 1829 Tarald bought Jaktodden in Augland where he settled for a while. In 1823 at age 17, he married Andrea Bergette Sturve, 21. She was born September 25, 1810 in her parents' house at 26 Consumptionsgade in Kristansand South¹⁵⁵ and baptized October 26.¹⁵⁶ Her father was Johan Heinrich Sturve, a rope maker from the Netherlands,¹⁵⁷ married to the German Anne Marie Moenich.¹⁵⁸

Tarald, a shoemaker, became the father of twenty-two children, ten born in Norway and twelve in the USA. Not all of his children born in Norway can be identified because the Church Protocol at Odernes lacks entries. The following can, however, be identified: Jens Joan, born May 13, 1832, in Kristansand S.; Johan Henrik Sturve, born January 10, 1834 in Kristiansand S.; Frantz Christian Sturve, born August 18, 1837, at Fiskaa; and Anna Marie, born May 17, 1840, was baptized the same day by the midwife, Madam Andersen from Kristiansand S., and died two days later, May 19. Isaach Sturve was born August 15, 1842, at Jaktodden, and a second Anna Marie was born April 4, 1844, at Jaktodden.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵*Kirkebøker–Oddernes 1764-1820*, a folio 147, Statsarkivet Kristiansand South.

¹⁵⁶*Kirkebøker–Kristiansand S 1778-1818*, baptized, 632, Statsarkivet Kristiansand South.

¹⁵⁷*Borgerrulle for Kristiansand* (People's Registry for Christansand) *1641-1820* (Kristiansand S: Kristiansand, 1952), 195.

¹⁵⁸Karl Levy, *Kristiansands bebyggelse og befolkning i eldre tider* (Christansand's Settlement and Population in ancient Times), vol. 7 (Kristiansand S.: Christianssands Sparebank, 1980), 159.

¹⁵⁹Letter from Normann Liene to Terje Johannessen, June 1, 1955. *Kirkebøker – Oddernes 1838-1851*, a folio 22, Statsarkivet Kristiansand S.; Kare Rudjord: *Oddernes bygdebok* (Odderne's County Book) II – *Gardshistorie* (History of Farms), 270.

Tarald sold the Fiskaa farm April 13, 1849, and the very next day the title deed was registered.¹⁶⁰ There are no lists stating when the family departed from their parish. They must have immigrated to the USA no earlier than April 14, 1849. In all likelihood they went with the above families at the same time and on the same boat.¹⁶¹

In the USA, Tarald Jensen Fiskaa changed his name to Tarel F. Johnson.¹⁶² His mother's surname was Johnsdotter. Tarald seems to have adopted her surname as his own since his father was dead.¹⁶³ Soon after arriving in the USA his wife died and he married Todne Olsdotter Øvland who had arrived on the same boat. She changed her name to Tone Johnson.

In all, four families made up of twenty-one individuals emigrated from Finsland and Vågsbygd to the USA in 1849 for reasons that included issues of faith. More families were to follow. Altogether in 1849, 4,000 Norwegians immigrated to the USA. Before 1814, the year of Norway's independence, this would have been unthinkable, because of the rule of royal absolutism from 1660. In the 1840s, governmental officials closely followed the emigration from Norway but did nothing to stop it.¹⁶⁴ From 1846 to

¹⁶⁰*Torridal Sorenskriveri* (District Stipendiary Magistrate Records for Torridal), Pantereg. Nr. 29b Oddernes 1b, 1790-1940, fol. 253, referred to in *pantebok* nr. 14 fol. 164, Statsarkivet i Kristiansand S.

¹⁶¹*Torridal Sorenskriveri: Pantebok* nr. 13, fol. 155A, 164, 165; Statsarkivet Kristiansand S. *Oddernes bygdebok II – Gardshistorie*, 270.

¹⁶²His tombstone in the Seventh-day Adventist Church's cemetery in Oakland, Wisconsin, reads Tarel F. Johnson. The "F" stands for Fiskaa in Vågsbygd, Norway. See pictures in appendix B.

¹⁶³*Torridal Sorenskriveri: Pantereg.* nr. 13, fol. 155A. Statsarkivet Kristiansand South.

¹⁶⁴Lovoll, 20.

1855, 30,542 left for the USA. From 1846 to 1900, 435,142 emigrated from Norway.¹⁶⁵

The voyage could take up to two months. All passengers were expected to bring with them their own kitchen utensils and food supplies for at least ten weeks. Although their exact place of embarking is unknown, most of them had no way of return. Everything had been sold or auctioned. The departure was for good.¹⁶⁶

Most Norwegian immigrants in the late 1840s came through New York City, then through the newly opened Erie Canal to the northwestern part of New York State.¹⁶⁷ In Orleans County, near Murray Township, about 35 miles (56 kilometers) northwest of Rochester, New York, was the settlement of Kendall. Here “the father of immigration” from Norway to the USA, Cleng Peerson (ca. 1783-1865), had secured land for each of the Sloopers families in 1825.¹⁶⁸ Each family bought forty acres at five dollars per acre and paid the total amount over the next ten years. The Kendall Settlement became a beachhead and a point of contact in the New World for Norwegian immigrants. In 1833, the same Cleng Peerson discovered the Fox River Valley in La Salle County, Illinois, about 70 miles (112 kilometers) southwest of Chicago. There the so-called Fox River

¹⁶⁵ Arnfinn Engen, ed., *Utvandringa–det store oppbrotet* (Emigration–the great breaking up) (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1978), 36.

¹⁶⁶ Engen, 26, 24.

¹⁶⁷ Lovoll, 24.

¹⁶⁸ The Sloopers were the very first group of 52 Norwegians to immigrate to America. They left Stavanger, Norway, July 4, 1825, on the sloop *Restauration* and entered New York Harbor 98 days later, on October 9, 1825. Cleng Peerson, from Tysvaer, Norway, led this group first to Upstate New York, then to LaSalle County, Illinois, where they established, near the present town of Norway, the “first permanent Norwegian settlement in the USA.” See <http://www.sloopersociety.org/> home.

Settlement, the second Norwegian settlement in the USA, was founded in 1834 by Norwegians from the Kendall Settlement.¹⁶⁹

The four families mentioned above most likely came to the USA through New York City to the Kendall Settlement, and then continued their journey to the Fox River Settlement in La Salle County, Illinois.

The Family of Andrew Olsen

Of the seven families who moved to the USA, Andrew Olsen's is the most renowned, because he became the elder of the first Seventh-day Adventist Norwegian church in America for "some twenty years,"¹⁷⁰ and because his eldest son Ole A. Olson became a president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Andrew Olsen was born on the Rekevik farm in Finsland, Norway, as Anders Olson Rekevik, either May 1 or 2, 1816.¹⁷¹ Later his family name became Haugedal, Skogen, Haugedal again, and then finally Øvland. His parents were Ola Halvorson Rekevik later Haugedal, when later he bought the farm Haugedal in 1828 and married Susanne Andersdotter Hedaas from Bjelland.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹Lewis Harrison Christian, *Sons of the North* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1942), 46; Lovoll, 16, 36, 38, 39.

¹⁷⁰C. McReynolds, 17.

¹⁷¹Both dates are used in official documents. See *Kirkebøker–Finsland 1816-1868*, p. 2, Statsarkivet, Kristiansand S., Norway. He was baptized in Finsland Church on May 5, 1816.

¹⁷²*Kirkebøker–Finsland B-3 1816-1868*, 2, Statsarkivet, Kristiansand S., Norway.

On October 15, 1844, Anders Olson Haugedal married¹⁷³ Berte Olsdotter Øvland Øfre¹⁷⁴ in Finsland Church. She was born on November 29 and baptized December 28, 1823, in Finsland Church.¹⁷⁵ The same year the couple bought Skogen farm and lived there until 1849.

To this union Ola Haugedal was born on July 28, and baptized September 21, 1845.¹⁷⁶ Another Ola was born March 4, 1848, baptized at home March 27, and died the same day.¹⁷⁷ Ola's twin sister Sørine, born March 4, was baptized April 12, 1848. Asborg was born August 8, 1849; she was not baptized.¹⁷⁸ This is very remarkable since it was customary to baptize children as soon as possible after their birth to ensure their eternal life. Although we do not know exactly why she was not baptized, the question will be treated later.

Berte Ølsdotter Øvland's parents were Ola Sørensen Øvland and Asborg Bertorsdotter. Berte was the second youngest of seven children. Of the seven children, the eldest and the youngest are of great interest for this presentation as we shall see later.

¹⁷³ *Kirkebøker–Finsland B-3 1816-1868*, 414, Statsarkivet, Kristiansand S., Norway.

¹⁷⁴ Her name in America became Bertha Olsen.

¹⁷⁵ *Kirkebøker–Finsland B-3 1816-1868*, 41, Statsarkivet, Kristiansand S., Norway.

¹⁷⁶ Daniel Ochs and Grace Lillian Ochs, *The Past and the Presidents* (Nashville: Southern Publishing, Association, 1974), 75; *Kirkebøker–Finsland B-3, 1816-1868*, Statsarkivet Kristiansand S., p. 110. According to this *Kirkebok*, Ole Haugedal was born August 28, 1845.

¹⁷⁷ *Haugedal Gardhistorie* (Haugedal Farm History) (Kristiansand S.: Edgar Høgfeldt, AS, 1952), 195. *Kirkebøker–Finsland B-3, 1816-1868*, Statsarkivet Kristiansand S., p. 117.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 121.

Berte's eldest brother was Søren, born in 1813 as already mentioned and her youngest sister was Todne. They both immigrated to the USA in 1849.

Anders and Berte bought the Skogen farm the same year they were married.¹⁷⁹ Their first child, Ole Anders Olsen, was born July 29, 1845. , and in 1888 became the president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.¹⁸⁰ He was registered as Ole A. Haugedal when he was baptized in Finsland Church that September.¹⁸¹

Anders Olsen, his wife Berte, and their children Ole, Sørine, and Asborg were written out of their parish March 26, 1850.¹⁸² They emigrated from Kristiansand South some time later on the sailing vessel *Hermes*.¹⁸³ The crossing of the Atlantic Ocean took

¹⁷⁹*Mandal Sorenskriveri*: Pantereg. Nr. 29–Finsland, fol. 309; Referred to in pantebok nr. 13, fol. 79, Statsarkivet i Kristiansand S.

¹⁸⁰According to the church registry in Finsland, he is said to have been born on August 29, but his correct date of birth was July 29. See Lewis Harrison Christian, "Litt om O. A. Olsens Liv og Virksomhet," *Evangeliets Sendebud* (The Messenger of the Gospel), March 9, 1915, 68. See also Kirkebøker- Finsland B-3 1816-1868, 110, Statsarkivet, Kristiansand S., Norway. The *SDAE* (s.v. "Olsen, Ole Anders") states incorrectly that Skogen, Norway, the birthplace of General Conference President Ole Anders Olsen (1845–1915) is "near Christiania (now Oslo), Norway." The farm Skogen is actually near Kristiansand South, about 327 kilometers south of Oslo. Since Kristiansand was formerly spelled Christiansand, it is understandable that someone could confuse it with Christiania.

¹⁸¹*Kirkebøker–Finsland B-3 1816-1868*, 110, Statsarkivet, Kristiansand S., Norway. The reason for the use of the name Haugedal is most likely due to the fact that Ole's father, Anders, who carried his father's family name at his marriage still did so at the baptism of his firstborn a little less than a year later.

¹⁸²*Ibid.*, 591-593; Lauvsland, 483.

¹⁸³Lawrence W. Onsager, *The First Norwegian-American Seventh-day Adventist Church in America* (Mauston, WI: Lemonweir Valley Press, 1985), 4, 5; Adriel D. Chilson, *Trial and Triumph on a Western Frontier* (Elko, NV: Heritage Publications, 1976), 49; Arild Rygnestad, "Dei reiste for trua," *Fædrelandsvennen*, September 4, 1978, 7.

nine weeks.¹⁸⁴ To make “the journey from New York up the Hudson River, then by the Erie Canal to Buffalo, and from thence by a steamer to Milwaukee, Wis., finishing with a bullock wagon 70 miles westward,” to the township of Oakland, Jefferson County, Wisconsin, took a whole month. During the 1840s, Wisconsin, a frontier state and sparsely settled, became the great goal of Norwegian immigrants and the center for Norwegian-American life until the American Civil War.¹⁸⁵

The Family of Ola Sørensen Fleskåsen Heggland

Ola Sørensen was born at Fleskåsen farm in May 1806 in Finsland. He was baptized 18 May the same year, most likely in Øvrebø Church.¹⁸⁶ His parents were Søren Olson Fleskåsen (born in 1777) and Anna Hansdotter Greipesland. Ola was the fourth child of this union and the third son. His wife was Ingjerd Aanensdotter Reiersdal, born March 25, 1809. They were married June 25, 1827 in Øvrebø Church, when he was twenty-one and she was eighteen, and lived on Føreland farm, from which Ingjerd’s father came, until 1831 when they bought the Heggland farm in Finsland.¹⁸⁷

Ola and Ingjerd had eleven children: Anders, born in 1828;¹⁸⁸ Søren, born September 16 and baptized October 17, 1830; Aanen, born March 2 and baptized March

¹⁸⁴C. McReynolds, 16.

¹⁸⁵Ibid.; Lovoll, 41.

¹⁸⁶*Kirkeboke –Finsland A-1 1799-1810*, 41, Statsarkivet in Kristiansand South. The date of birth is not mentioned in the Church Protocol. See *Kirkebøker– Finsland A-1 1700-1810*, 41, Statsarkivet in Kristiansand South. See also Lauvland, 38, 40.

¹⁸⁷Lauvland, 36, 37.

¹⁸⁸According to *Bjelland Kirkebøker*, no. 17 at Statsarkivet Kristiansand S., they had ten children before arriving in USA in the autumn of 1850. The eleventh child was

25, 1832; Anne, born May 22 and baptized June 18, 1834; Torjus, born November 26 and baptized December 26, 1841; Randi, born February 21 and baptized March 21, 1841; Ola, born November 20, 1843, and baptized January 1, 1844; Aasa, born June 5 and baptized July 12, 1846; Hans, born in 1847,¹⁸⁹ and finally Caroline, born August 10, 1850, soon after the family arrived in the USA.¹⁹⁰

Ola immigrated to the USA in the spring of 1850 with his wife and all of his children except Aanen, who married Sille Bertine Bentsdotter Kleveland in 1853. After the death of her husband, Sille Bertine moved to Sveinall, Laudal, where she lived for the rest of her life and came therefore to be known as Sillebertine Sveinall in Laudal.¹⁹¹

When Ola came to the USA he changed his name from Ola Sørensen Heggland to Ola Heggland Serns. Just before leaving Norway he sold his farm, Heggland, which provided him with enough money for the voyage and to buy a new farm of 80 acres for \$100 in Oakland, Wisconsin, on July 15, 1850.¹⁹² He died of an accident while working in the woods only seven years after arriving in Wisconsin.¹⁹³ Thus two families, made up

born August 10, 1859; Jon Åsen, *I Gard og ætt* (Farm and lineage) (Kristiansand S.: Einar Hogfeldt AS, 1951), 551.

¹⁸⁹*Kirkebøker–Finsland B-3 1816-1868*; Statsarkivet Kristiansand S., 72, 80, 89, 98, 101, 106, 113.

¹⁹⁰Rygnestad, 7.

¹⁹¹Lauvsland, 31-37. See also Åsen, 179.

¹⁹²Jefferson County Abstract Co.: “Examination of title made Nov. 1st, 1899 for Andrew Serns, Esq.,” quoted in Floyd Serns and Elsie Serns, “Serns Family Saga 39 B.C.—1975, Finsland Sogn, Norway to America,” Unpublished manuscript, n.d., 26.

¹⁹³Rygnestad, 7.

of sixteen individuals, emigrated from Finsland in 1850. They boarded the sailing vessel *Hermes* in Kristiansand S. for the United States of America.¹⁹⁴

The Family of Halvor Olsen Øvland Øfre

Halvor Olsen Øvland, the brother of Anders Olsen, was born in 1813 at Regenvik.¹⁹⁵ Their mother was Susanne Andersdotter. Halvor married Aasa Nilsdotter Øvland,¹⁹⁶ and they had two children, Sørine and Ola. In 1856 Halvor and Aasa sold their Øvland farm. On March 4, 1856,¹⁹⁷ Halvor together with his wife, children, and mother got their certificate of withdrawal from their Finsland parish and left soon after for the USA.

Halvor's mother Susanna Andersdotter Hedås Bjelland was 65 years of age when she went with her son and family to the USA. She had married Ola Halvorson Regevik in 1801. He was born in 1775 but had passed away some years before the immigration.¹⁹⁸ Thus one family of five individuals emigrated in 1856. In all, seven families of forty-two individuals had by now emigrated from the same area in Norway within a span of seven years, later to join hands in Wisconsin and become the nucleus of the Norwegian Seventh-day Adventist Church.

¹⁹⁴Onsager, 4, 5; Chilson, 49; Rygnestad, 7.

¹⁹⁵Lauvsland, 65.

¹⁹⁶Ibid., 450.

¹⁹⁷*Kirkebøker–Finsland a-2 1816-1869*, 587, Statsarkivet i Kristiansand S.

¹⁹⁸Lauvsland, 450.

The Emigration (1849-1856)

“In these days,” stated the Norwegian newspaper *Christiania-Posten* on Thursday, May 8, 1851, one “continually” met emigrants on their way to the Norwegian settlements in the West. They were leaving their beautiful home valleys and seashores, making their way to the seaports to embark on sailing vessels to carry them to the Promised Land. They had a look of “earnestness and decision,” and when asked whether they found it hard to leave their homeland they often replied, “Oh, yes, but we have made up our minds and will hold to our decision.”¹⁹⁹ Theodore C. Blegen asserts that “the Norwegian emigration became a major exodus, a colossal movement in proportion to the total population of Norway.”²⁰⁰ He claimed the “American fever” spread over the entire country of Norway, “touching every district, every hamlet, almost every family.”²⁰¹

Nineteenth-century Norwegian emigration to the USA began when the small sloop *Restauration* (Restoration) sailed from Stavanger in Norway with fifty-two people on board and some iron for sale, July 4, 1825. The sloop reached New York on October 9, 1825 after fourteen weeks at sea. Upon its arrival, the American government officials

¹⁹⁹*Christiania-Posten* (Christiania-Mail), May 8, 1851, front page.

²⁰⁰In 1801 the total population of Norway was 883,487; in 1835 it was 1,194,827; and in 1865 it was 1,701,756. From 1820 to 1865 the Norwegian migration amounted to 77,874. Due to the American Civil War, the migration was only 28,597 from 1865 to 1880. From 1880 to 1893 it amounted to 254,666. The third great wave of migration came during the first decades of the twentieth century, reaching a total of almost 25,000 people in the one year, 1903. From 1865 to 1930, 780,000 left for America. From the very beginning of emigration until 1980 more than 900,000 left for America. From 1846 to 1865 all counties in Norway except Nordland had emigrants. Theodore C. Blegen, *Norwegian Migration to America, the Norwegian-American* (Northfield, MN: Historical Association, 1940), 454, 455. See also Odd S. Lovoll, *Det løfterike landet* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1983), 14, 17, 20.

²⁰¹Blegen, 454.

discovered that, according to an American law of 1819, the sloop had carried twenty-one passengers too many. This incurred the penalty of confiscation of the vessel and a fine of \$3,150—that is \$150 for each of the twenty-one excess passengers. The sloop was bonded for \$600 with the Quaker Francis Thompson as security. However, a presidential pardon of the sloop people was issued November 15 the same year by president John Quincy Adams and his secretary of state Henry Clay.²⁰²

This first Norwegian emigration of the nineteenth century to America was strongly influenced by religious motivation. The leader of the expedition was Lars Larsen Geilane who was a member of the Society of Friends in Stavanger.²⁰³ In addition to the Quakers on board there were also a number of Haugians, also known as “the holy ones.”²⁰⁴ Upon arrival in America, the Quakers took care of the new immigrants.

Professor Cabury has pointed out that the Norwegian sloop *Restauration* was less than one fourth of the size of the *Mayflower* which had carried English Protestants to the

²⁰²Blegen, 601, 615.

²⁰³The teachings of the Religious Society of Friends, commonly called Quakers, were brought to Norway by some Norwegian prisoners of war in England 1807-1814. Consequently the Religious Society of Friends was established in Stavanger and Oslo. See also Lovoll, 14.

²⁰⁴The *Haugianere* or Haugians, were followers of Hans Nielsen Hauge, an independent Christian movement within the Norwegian State Church. See p. 36, above, and Lovoll, 16.

new world in 1620.²⁰⁵ But the new little Norwegian “Mayflower” had also crossed the Atlantic Ocean and arrived in the New World carrying religiously motivated people looking for freedom of conscience and equality for all. The Fox River settlement became their new home. In 1831, Gjert Gregoriussen Hovland wrote home about the “wonderful and fertile land” where there was much greater freedom and equality. The so-called America-letters or immigrant-letters had a tremendous influence in Norway because they spoke so much of freedom and equality and the fact that the common man did not have to bow to public officers and the upper class. All were regarded as equal whether farmer, craftsman, shopkeeper, or official of the local or federal government.²⁰⁶

Hans Nielsen Hauge whose influence was greatly felt throughout Norway at this time was fully in agreement with the America-letters. Georg Nome thinks that the uprising of the farmers, especially during the early time of the emigration, began at the religious level because of the influence of Hans Nielsen Hauge. He also maintains that Hans Nielsen Hauge taught the farmers to reach their own personal and individual belief and stick to it, even if it would lead to conflict with the priests or bailiffs. The Movement of the Haugians, he continues, loosened up the old bonds of authority and strengthened the feeling of liberation and independence among the farmers. And this helped to extend this feeling of power of independence far beyond the sphere of the farmers.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵Blegen, 601, 615. The sloop measured 18.5 commercial lasts or 38.48 tons.

²⁰⁶Lovoll, 18.

²⁰⁷Georg Nome, *Årbok* (Yearbook) 1956; “Kretsleserordningen på Sørlandet,” (Arrangement of literary Reading Circles in the South), article in *Agder Bispedomme* (Agder Bishopric) (Kristiansand South, 1956), 49, 52.

The Reason for the Emigration of the Seven Families

The primary motivation of the seven families for emigrating from Norway to the USA, according to Andrew Olsen, was their “awakened” religious interest caused by the “labors of some Quakers and other lay preachers, some of whom were very earnest and devoted and quite familiar with the Bible.” These meetings were commonly held in private homes which might be called “cottage meetings,” continued Olson. He reported that the “question of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment was first mentioned to us” in such a meeting. After the close of the meeting a number of those who attended were “conversing on Scripture subjects.” During the conversation the minister Hoffmann Carlsen made a statement as follows: ‘If we should strictly follow the Scriptures, we should keep the Saturday and not Sunday; for there is no Scripture evidence for keeping the Sunday.’”²⁰⁸

Andrew thought that “this statement by the Minister was a great surprise to those present; and from that time the question became a general subject of discussion and investigation.” He then goes on to say: “While this investigation did not lead to the observance of the Sabbath, it did make a lasting impression, which in after-years bore fruit.”²⁰⁹

Andrew Olsen said above that the statement about the Sabbath became “a general subject of discussion and investigation” with them. Although primary sources are scarce regarding community reactions to their interest in the Sabbath, there is one newspaper article which expressed its view regarding the Swede Nylund who caused Rev. Carlsen to

²⁰⁸McReynolds, 16.

²⁰⁹Ibid.

make his statement about the Sabbath. The author said that Nylund “is without a doubt of such people which one would rather sooner than later get rid of.” He also stated that Nylund “frequently stays at Fiskaa” which is one of the farms belonging to one of the seven farmers who immigrated to USA.²¹⁰ One may assume that the author was not only expressing his own sentiments but also those of some of his readers. It is therefore probable that those who experienced “lasting impression” concerning the truth about the Sabbath, an event they would never forget, also were exposed to religious mistreatment, together with Nylund who brought them the Sabbath message. Sillebertine Sveinall summed up the cause of their immigration by saying that “they departed because of their faith.”²¹¹

One of Aanen’s and Sillebertine’s great-grandchildren, Ingrid Homme Skuland, who was fifteen in 1931 when her great-grandmother celebrated her ninety-fifth birthday, enjoyed very much listening to her telling her about the “old times.” Ingrid Skuland says that Sillebertine told her that her in-laws Ola and Ingjer Heggland had sold everything they possessed to leave for America because of their “new-found faith.”²¹²

²¹⁰ *Christiansands Stiftsavis og Adresse-Kontors Erfterretninger* (Christiansand’s County News and Address-Office Tidings), nr. 56, Onsdag, July 12, 1848.

²¹¹ Sillebertine Sveinall was a relative of one of the seven families. She died in 1931 at the age of ninety-five. It is not known when she changed her surname to Sveinall. Sillebertine was married to Aanen Olson Heggland. He was the son of Ola and Ingjer Sørensen Heggland (in America his name became Ole Serns) who immigrated in 1850 to USA. Aanen was the only child of the Hegglands who did not go with his family to America because he was engaged to be married to Sillebertine. They were married February 3, 1853, in Bjelland Church. Sillebertine Sveinall’s original full name was Sille Bertine Bentsdatter Kleveland. See Lauvland, 36, 37. See also Rygnestad, 7. “Dei reiste for truå” is the Norwegian original of “they departed because of their faith.”

²¹² Based on a personal and taped conversation with Ingrid Homme Skuland, December 4, 1988.

That they immigrated to USA because of their faith is further confirmed by five more witnesses: the late Harold C. Peterson of Berrien Springs, Michigan, the late Tony and Dorothy Larson of Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin, and Milo and Evelyn Larson of 1 Advent Road, Oakland, Wisconsin.²¹³

Arild Rygnestad also confirms that it was *not* because of their relatively “small and meager farms” that they had left for America. He says: “Their religious interest and activity was great.” They had learned to know a “different school of thought which at that time was not accepted in Finsland or in the rest of the country.”²¹⁴ The seven families or forty-two individuals who left Finsland and Vågsbygd in 1849, 1850, and 1856 did not leave primarily because their farms were “relatively small and meager” but because of their new understanding of the Christian “faith like so many before had done.”²¹⁵ The reason for their emigration may therefore also be summed up by the words of G. Gravdal who was a Haugian and also preferred to leave Norway because of his religious convictions. He said:

We were not really persecuted for our faith, but we were nevertheless subject to much evil mentioning, and we had to suffer much mockery and ridicule by those who were of different persuasion. I do not want to say that this intolerance was the reason for our emigrating, although it contributed to make ripe our decision to leave a land, where we were exposed to many infringements of our rights, because our understanding of the teaching of the religion was not in agreement with the faith of the majority.²¹⁶

²¹³I had long and interesting conversations several times with all of them in 1988 concerning the early days of the Norwegian Seventh-day Adventists of Oakland, Wisconsin. The Larsons were related to Andrew Olsen. The farm of Andrew Olsen belongs to Evelyn and Milo Larson today.

²¹⁴Rygnestad, 7.

²¹⁵Ibid.

²¹⁶Svein Nilson, *Billed-Magazin* (Picture-Magazine), April 24, 1869, 161, 162.

Gravdal claims he left for the New World in order to avoid “evil mentioning,” “mockery and ridicule,” and “many infringements of our rights.” In other words, he emigrated chiefly because, like the seven families, he held an understanding of Christianity that did not harmonize with the Lutheran State Church. The words of Gravdal are a reminder of the sentiments expressed in the newspaper *Christiansands Stiftsavis og Adresse-Kontors Erfterretninger* of Christiansand South in 1848 concerning Nylund and his frequent visits to Fiskaa farm where the seven families undoubtedly came together because of common interests.²¹⁷

Francis Christian Johnson said that the seven families had “accepted” Nylund’s “teaching, but did not keep the Sabbath, because we thought we would wait to do so until we had crossed the Atlantic Ocean where there would not be any persecution.”²¹⁸

First Probable Awareness of the Seventh-day Sabbath in Finsland in 1839

According to Ingrid Homme Skuland (1915-1991), tradition has it that Ola Sørensen Heggland had kept the seventh-day Sabbath of the fourth commandment since 1839. There are no sources known so far that can support Skuland’s statement. If it were true, it may be credited to an indirect influence of Hans Nielsen Hauge and his lay preachers who were very active in Kristiansand South and its vicinity during the first half of the eighteenth century, where Vågsbygd and Finsland are located. By 1835 the Haugians had firmly established themselves in Kristiansand South where they opened

²¹⁷ *Christiansands Stiftsavis og Adresse-Kontors Erfterretninger* (Christiansand’s County News and Address-Office Tidings), nr. 56, Onsdag, July 12, 1848.

²¹⁸ McReynolds, 16.

their own religious center called Norem-Hall, thanks to the donor Endre Norem.²¹⁹

During the 1840s the followers of Hans Nielsen Hauge had established themselves in “almost every district in Agder.”²²⁰ By this time they constituted an independent “religious group” although they attended the local state church every Sunday. They had their own devout, God-fearing, and pious gatherings either in the open or in private homes, and made a tremendous impact in all districts.²²¹ These Haugians are most likely the lay preachers mentioned by Andrew Olsen above.

In 1804 Hauge helped to establish a printing press in Kristiansand South, where he published his widely circulated book entitled *Exposition of the Law and the Gospel* where he explained the commandments and the gospel and their mutual relationship.²²² Hauge’s comments in this book on the seventh-day Sabbath commandment are worth noticing:

He who then rested on the seventh day and blessed it, this seventh day is Saturday, as we call it, on which man, according the Lord’s command, rested from

²¹⁹Oscar Handeland, *Kristenliv på Agder* (The Christian Life in Agder) (Oslo: Forbundets forlag, Det norske lutherske kinamisjonsforbund, 1948), 18, 21. See also Alv Kristiansen, ed., *Bygd og by i Norge—Agder* (Country and Town in Norway—Agder) (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag), 307-309. Gunvald Kvarstein og B. J. Kvarstein, *Fra Kirke- og kristenliv i Vennesla* (About the Church and the Christian Life in Vennesla) (Kristiansand South: Edgar Høgfeldt, A.s., 1948), 34, 74. Norem-Hall is in its Norwegian original *Norem-salen*.

²²⁰Agder is the county where Kristiansand South, Vågsbygd, and Finsland are located.

²²¹Bjørn Slettan “Om jeg kunne min Jesus prise . . . Folkelig religiositet og vekkelse på Agder på 1800-tallet (If I only could praise my Jesus . . . Folk Religiosity and Revival in Agder during the 19th Century) (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1992), 14-16. See also Bjørn Slettan, *Årskrift* (Yearbook) nr. 65, “Nesten hele bygden ble rystet” (Almost the whole County was shaken) (Agder: Agder Historielag, 1978), 78.

²²²Ording, *Hans Neilsen Hauge*, 4:247-303. *Exposition of the Law and the Gospel* reads in Norwegian, *Forklaringer over Loven og Evangelium*.

the works of his body, whereas the Christians after the time of Christ, changed it to Sunday on which Christ rose up from the dead. Although this change was made by men, we hope nevertheless that this is the will of God, at least that is why we have accepted it, and know too, that God is neither dependent upon time nor place, but is omnipresent and present at all times. For Him therefore it does not matter at what time it is, and in addition he is just as much a mighty God without us, hence it is for our necessity, yet our obedience may be tested hereby too.²²³

The quotation makes it plain that Hauge thought seriously about the seventh-day Sabbath question and knew that Sunday observance “was made by men” and that God had “rested on the seventh day and blessed it,” implicitly acknowledging that no other day was endowed with such sanctification. He hoped, however, that Sunday keeping was nevertheless acceptable to “the will of God” because “that is why we have accepted it.” The question of the Sabbath stayed with Hauge at least the next five years. In a letter dated April 17, 1809, at Lillesand and addressed to friends he said that “the Sabbath, which the first Christians kept until about the year 100 AD, was Saturday, although Christians weak in virtue altered it later to Sunday.”²²⁴ These two statements must have made a very deep impression on his followers, especially since Hauge always emphasized the *Sola Scriptura* principle in his preaching, yet acknowledged at the same time that Sunday observance was not biblical, even declaring that the Christian Church had observed the seventh-day Sabbath throughout the entire age of the apostles. It seems possible that his many and very active followers in Agder must have, at one time or another, discussed these statements—in spite of the lack of presently extant sources to verify such a speculation. This could be a possible explanation for the Sabbath-keeping oral tradition of Ola Sørensen Heggland. However, the Sabbath question did not become

²²³Ording, *Hans Nielsen Hauge*, 4:262.

²²⁴Kvamen, 2:24, 25.

a “general subject of discussion and investigation” among the seven families until about a decade later, as stated by Andrew Olsen above.²²⁵

The Sabbath Message at Fiskaa

In 1859 Francis Christian Johnson wrote a letter to the Adventist editor of *Review and Herald* Uriah Smith (1832-1903), stating that he had heard the sound of “the third angel’s message in the autumn of 1848” at the age of eleven, “in his land of birth, Norway.” He goes on to say that there “was a Swede who preached the Commandments of God and the faith of Jesus in that part of Norway where we lived. We accepted his teaching, but did not keep the Sabbath, because we thought we would wait to do so until we had crossed the Atlantic Ocean where there would not be any persecution.”²²⁶

That there was a Swede by the name of Nylund in Kristiansand S. and its vicinity at this time was reported by a local newspaper.

For the time being a Swede whose name is Nyland is staying here in town. He is without a doubt of such people which one would rather sooner than later get rid of. He passes himself off as someone with a religious commission and looks upon himself as a prophet of the Lord. Whether others should think of him as such, there can be no doubt, if it is a fact such as some say he has uttered, that a plague shall hit the town within two months. He himself looks upon himself as being sinless. Without a doubt he belongs to the Erik Jahnsen’s Sect in Sweden, and as such he rejects all books except the Bible, which he explains in his own way. The author, who is absolutely sure that the mentioned individual is of a false spirit and can easily lead astray the less observant people, views it as his duty to warn by these lines against this person. One allows oneself to make the police aware of the fact whether he has provided himself with proper passport to travel about. Such people view themselves

²²⁵McReynolds, 16.

²²⁶Francis C. Johnson, Letter to the Editor, *RH*, March 17, 1859, 134. “Third angel’s message” is a term Adventists use to refer to Rev 14:9-12, which they understand as referring to the eschatological conflict regarding whether the Sabbath or Sunday is the right day for worship. Francis Christian Johnson was born in 1837 as Sturve Jenson Fiskaa, son of Tarald Jensen Fiskaa and Andrea Bergette Johnson Sturve.

above such mere trifles as to provide themselves with an identification card for such travels. In case he is without such documentation it should be very easy to get rid of him. Allegedly, it has been reported, that he frequently stays at Fiskaa.²²⁷

This quotation alleges that Nyland belonged to Swedish Eric Jahnsen's movement. "Jahnsen" is spelled "Jansson" in Swedish and his movement in Sweden was called "Erik-Jansare" or "Erik-Jansonismen." Erik Jansson came from Österunda parish in Vestmanland. He studied Luther, Arndt, and Norborg and thought that their writings did not harmonize with the teaching of the Bible concerning sanctification. He therefore started preaching and gathered a considerable following among commoners, especially in Helsingland, where in 1844 he established a group of his followers who received the label "Erik-Jansare." He now looked upon himself as a "God inspired prophet" whom all had to "obey," and without which "no salvation was possible." He then decided to burn all spiritual books except the Bible and his own writings. Because of this he and his followers were "persecuted," which in turn led a large number of them to emigrate to the United States of America in 1845, 1846, and 1847. In New York they were met by the Methodist pastor O. C. Heström at his "Bethelship." From here they went on to Illinois. Erik Jansson himself left Sweden for New York in June 1846. Many of the followers of Jansson joined the Methodist Church after arriving in the United States.²²⁸

According to the article there are certain similarities between Nylund and Jansson. They both thought they had a religious commission and looked upon themselves as prophets of the Lord. The quote also maintains that frequent meetings were held at

²²⁷ *Christiansands Stiftsavis og Adresse-Kontors Erfterretninger* (Christiansand's County News and Address-Office Tidings), no. 56, Wednesday, July 12, 1848.

²²⁸ T. M. Erikson, *Metodismen i Sverige* (Methodism in Sweden) (Stockholm: K. J. Bohlins Förlag, 1895), 32, 34.

Fiskaa, which was the name of the farm of Francis Christian Johnson's father (i.e., Tarald Jensen Fiskaa), who became known as Tarel F. Johnson in the USA as mentioned above. Who exactly this Nylund was, we may never know. He has been variously called Nylon, Newlund, and Nyland.²²⁹

According to the Sernses, Nylund was "not himself a Christian" who had held meetings in the home of the Loes before they emigrated and pointed out that "the proper day of worship was the seventh day of the week."²³⁰ Halswick thinks he was a Quaker who held meetings in the vicinity of Andrew Olsen's home.²³¹

What can be said with certainty is that the local pastor, Hoffmann Carlsen of the Norwegian State Church in Finsland, attended a home meeting where Andrew Olsen and a number of others were present. While they were "conversing on Scripture subjects" after the meeting, the minister made the following statement: "If we should strictly follow the Scriptures, we should keep the Saturday and not Sunday; for there is no Scripture evidence for keeping the Sunday."²³² The stimulus for his making such a statement may have been the challenge from the Swede Nylund, because, according to Johnson, Nylund had spoken about the Sabbath message in Johnson's home at Fiskaa.²³³

²²⁹John Orr Corliss, "The Message and Its Friends," *RH*, November 1, 1923, 4; see also Ochs, 77; Floyd Serns and Elsie Serns, "Serns Family Saga, 39 B.C.—1975, Finsland, Sogn, Norway to America" (Unpublished manuscript, n.d.), 24; Louis Halswick, *Missionserfaringer fra Nybyggerlivet i America* (Missionary experiences from the life of the settlers) (Brookfield, IL: Pacific Press, n.d.), 7; John O. Corliss, "The Message and Its Friends," *RH*, November 1, 1923, 4.

²³⁰Serns and Serns, 24.

²³¹Halswick, 7.

²³²C. McReynolds, 16.

²³³Francis C. Johnson, Letter to Editor, *RH*, March 17, 1859, 134.

Possible Source of the Sabbath Message in Vågbygd and Finsland

Since Nylund was a Swede, the most likely known source for this particular and unusual message may have been the child preachers of Sweden. For more than a year between the autumn of 1842 and the winter of 1843 a spiritual miracle is reported to have taken place in Sweden which has been called the phenomenon of the child preachers.

At this time in Sweden the power of the clergy was exercised to prevent the preaching of any lay people and especially the *ropare*, which was the name given to the child preachers in Sweden. *Ropare* means “the one who cries out or shouts.”

Erik Walbom, eighteen, and O. Boquist, fifteen, in Karlskoga in the county of Örebro were *ropare*. In the autumn of 1843 they proclaimed with a strong voice that “the hour of his judgment is come” the “first angel’s message” of Rev 14:6-7. They based their testimony on Revelation and on Joel 2:28-30. When great crowds gathered to hear them the police arrested the *ropare* and brought them before the pastors. About forty others had the same experience. All were released except Walbom and Boquist, who were kept in Örebro county jail and reportedly were even tortured there.²³⁴

Although the clergy of the State church opposed the movement and used their influence to stop the preachers of this particular and peculiar message by putting them into prison, they could not silence all the preachers. An eight-year-old boy who manifested only the intelligence and ability usually seen in a child of that age, started in the same area crying out the same message as Walbom and Boquist. When he stood before the people it was evident that the child was moved by an influence beyond his own natural gifts. Tone and manner of his voice changed, and with solemn power he gave the

warning about the judgment to come, employing the very words of Scripture: "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his Judgment is come [Rev 14:7]."²³⁵

King Oscar I of Sweden (1799–1859) had commanded that these children should be left alone. Yet, a local pastor decided to reveal to all the ignorance of the boy child. Before a number of people the pastor held high a hymn book and asked the boy to read a hymn. The boy said he could not read. The boy then turned his back to the pastor and sang the whole hymn by heart. "You think you know everything," the pastor said. "No," said the boy child: I do not, and we are not always allowed to say all we know." The pastor then opened the Bible and asked the boy to read. The boy replied again that he could not. Then the pastor asked, "What do you know about the Bible?" The boy answered right away: "I do know a verse in the Bible which contains the word "and" fourteen times. It is Revelation 18:13" [so also in KJV]. The pastor had to admit that the boy was right, to the amusement of all who were listening. As the boy was under age, the law of the State could not restrain him, so he and other children continued to speak freely and without being hindered.²³⁶

The movement was chiefly among the lower class, and it was in the humble dwellings of the laborers that the people assembled to hear the warning of judgment and of the mark of the beast (Rev 14:7-12). The child-preachers themselves were mostly poor cottagers, but their crying out of prophecy excited much interest. They thus continued for

²³⁴*Svenska Sjuendedags Adventisternas historia* (History of the Swedish Seventh-day Adventists) (Stockholm: Sjuendedags Adventisternas svenska avdeling, 1928), 67.

²³⁵*Ibid.*

²³⁶*Ibid.*, 67, 68.

some years to exert an extensive influence, and were instrumental in calling the attention of many to the study of the prophecies concerning the second coming of Christ and the Sabbath.

Since Johnson says that he heard the third angel's message concerning the Sabbath in his home at Fiskaa,²³⁷ and since the Swede Nylund was the only one who stayed at Johnson's home preaching the Sabbath message in the late 1840s, Nylund may very well have been influenced by the child preachers of his own country Sweden.²³⁸ Nobody else was proclaiming this special message of the three angels of Rev 14 in Scandinavia at this time except the child preachers. Whoever Nylund was, and to whatever confession of faith he belonged, he was preaching the third angel's message which caused a "Sabbath agitation" and thus became instrumental in "making a lasting impression" on the seven families "which in after-years bore fruit."²³⁹

Ole Anders Olson, the son of Berte and Anders Olson Øvland, sums it up: "The first steps to the beginning of the Advent movement among Scandinavians date back to the years 1848-49. In the southern part of Norway a short distance from Kristiansand S. there lived at that time some believers who were not fully satisfied with what they obtained as the divine service in the state church with its dead forms and rituals."²⁴⁰

²³⁷Francis C. Johnson, Letter to the Editor, *RH*, March 17, 1859, 134.

²³⁸*Christiansands Stiftsavis og Adresse-Kontors Erfaringer*, no. 56, Onsdag, July 12, 1848.

²³⁹C. McReynolds, 16.

²⁴⁰Ole A. Olsen, Introduction to *Mattesons Liv og Adventbevegelsens Begyndelse blandt Skandinaverne* (Matteson's life and the beginning of the Advent Movement among Scandinavians), by John G. Matteson (College View, NE: International Publishing Association, 1908), xiii.

Infant Baptism Declined

It is also worth noticing that Asborg, the youngest child of Berte and Anders Olson Øvland, born in Norway on August 8, 1849, was not baptized.²⁴¹ This was highly unusual, because for the Lutherans it meant that her soul would not go to heaven at death. Her birth was about ten months before they immigrated to the USA, so an upcoming departure could not be the reason for not baptizing her. Although they do not tell in plain language why she was not baptized, this action is at least a clear indication that their ties with the Lutheran state church were seriously weakened, paving the way for baptism by immersion later on.²⁴²

According to Pastor Magne Rosen, the vicar Hoffman Carlsen of Finsland Church thought the Øvlands' refusal to have their daughter baptized was unheard-of, unprecedented, indecent, and improper. His disapproval led to harassment and provocation of the family.²⁴³ This persecution ripened into a decision by the Øvlands to emigrate to the "new promised land" where they "would find the spiritual light their soul longed for."²⁴⁴ They were joined by Anders' brother-in-law and his family and left for the USA in the spring of 1850 as mentioned above.

²⁴¹*Kirkebøker–Finsland* B-13, 1816-1868, Statsarkivet i Kristiansand S., 121.

²⁴²C. McReynolds, 16.

²⁴³Magne Rosen, *Sørendingen som ble Generalkonferensens formann* (the Southerner who became the President of the General Conference), *Evangeliets Sendebud*, 12, 1957, 11; Terje Johannessen, personal conversation with Magne Rosen where he mentions Eivind Reiersen, Nils Tofte, Frans Anderson, and Roland Lun as sources for his article.

²⁴⁴Øivind Gjertsen, *The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway: A Factual Account*, quoted in Sigmund Skard et al., eds., *Americana Norvegiaca* (Norwegian Contribution to American Studies), vol. 2 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press; Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 1969), 77.

Summary

The Norwegians' first contact with Christianity was with the Celtic Church no later than the ninth century. It took centuries for Norway to become Christian. To the Celts the Bible was the supreme authority regarding doctrine and morals. That led them among other things to keep the seventh-day Sabbath as the day of worship. Not until the middle of the twelfth century did the Roman Catholic faith, based on traditions, canon laws, decisions of councils, and the pope, emerge in Norway with the help of the state. The Lutheran Reformation entered Norway through Denmark in the sixteenth century by the spoken and the written word, but not without help from the king's politics. *Sola scriptura* became again the basis for doctrine and morals within the Norwegian church.

During the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century a unique religious revival took place in Norway due to the preaching and writings of Hans Nielsen Hauge, who by so doing faced persecution. Yet, in spite of persecution, the Conventicle Act (which restricted religious freedom in the practice and preaching of the word of God), and the imprisonment of Hauge, the people did finally and freely choose their own form of worship according to their own consciences. Most of them, however, remained formal members of the state church. Still others preferred to immigrate to the United States of America to find freedom of conscience.

The foregoing study considered seven families from Finsland and Vågsbygd, who not only experienced the revival of Haugianism, but even heard the third angel's message proclaimed at Fiskaa brought there by the Swede Nylund. The first angel's message was widely proclaimed in Sweden in 1843 and 1843 by the children preachers which probably led to the preaching of the third angel's message later in Norway in 1848.

These seven families had great respect for the authority of the Bible, which led them to keep the seventh-day Sabbath, leave their homes for greater freedom of worship in the United States of America, and eventually to join the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

As already mentioned, Andrew Olsen refers to these religious beginnings in Finsland and Vågsbygd as “that little beginning in Norway and later in Wisconsin, Oakland” which grew “into a mighty work,”²⁴⁵ that eventually resulted in the establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway.

²⁴⁵C. McReynolds, 17.

CHAPTER 2

DEVELOPMENTS AT OAKLAND, WISCONSIN

Why Norwegians Chose Wisconsin

During the 1840s and 1850s, Wisconsin became the great goal of Norwegian emigrants and a center for Norwegian-American activities until the American Civil War.¹ The Koshkonong² settlement in Wisconsin had been established in 1840. In 1839 three men from Voss, Norway, came to the Koshkonong Prairie to settle their new homes.³ These were Nils Sjurson Gjarhus⁴ and Nils Larson Bolstad with their guide Odd J. Himle.⁵ Nils Larson Bolstad had left Norway from Bergen on the ship *Ægir* on April 7, 1837, together with eight-two other passengers. “For a short while he stayed with other Norwegians from Voss in the Fox River settlement in Illinois.”⁶

¹Lovoll, 41.

² Koshkonong means “the lake we live by” or “the lake on which we dwell” and was so named by the Indians. See Michael J. Bovre and Mary Ellen Christensen, *Early Norwegian Settlers on Koshkonong Prairie, 1839, 1840, 1841* (Koshkonong Prairie Historical Society, WI: 1989), 3; and Hannah Swart, *Koshkonong Country* (Fort Atkinson, WI: W. D. Hoard & Sons, 1975), 205.

³Koshkonong Prairie is an area located in southeast Wisconsin containing today several townships totally or partially.

⁴Also known as Nils Severson (also Nels Siverson) Gilderhus.

⁵Bovre and Christensen, 3.

⁶Ibid., 4.

The three men set out for Christiana on the Koshkonong Prairie in the autumn of 1839 and had to walk 150 miles from La Salle County, Illinois, to Milwaukee and then eighty miles to their destination in the eastern part of Dane County, Wisconsin. They found an “abundance of hardwood timber, plenty of marsh hay, and fine fishing in the Koshkonong Creek.” This was an answer to their quest. They “each selected 40 acres and 40 for a friend,” Magne Bottolfson Bystolen, who had not been able to accompany them because he was too ill to do so. Since winter was approaching, they had to return to La Salle County.⁷

At the end of April 1840, Giljarhus and Bolstad returned to the Koshkonong Prairie together with their friend Bystolen and Andrew Finno on wagons drawn by oxen “and took possession of their land” and “built a log house which proved unsuitable for the winter so they made a dug-out in an embankment.”⁸ By 1850, Koshkonong, Wisconsin, had 2,670 Norwegians.⁹ According to the federal census of 1860, 29,557 Norwegians had settled in Wisconsin.¹⁰

After a few years, Norwegian newcomers to America thought of Wisconsin as a haven for all in search of land. The Danish immigrant Laurits Jacob Friberg, in his book *Haandbog for Emigranter til Amerikas Vest*, declared the climate of Wisconsin amenable to all and the soil very fertile. He also reported that the land was much

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., 5.

⁹Theodore C. Blegen, *Norwegian Migration to America, 1751 to 1860* (Northfield, MN: The Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1931), 141.

¹⁰Blegen, *Norwegian Migration to America, American Transition*, 485. For more details, see also Carlton C. Qualley, *Norwegian Settlement in the United States* (Northfield, MN: The Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1938), chapter 5.

more affordable than it was on the eastern seaboard. Land was indeed abundant in Wisconsin and could be purchased at prices from 0.62 to 1.22 US dollars per acre.¹¹ In addition, other Scandinavian settlements which had already begun to dot parts of the territory were also viewed favorably by the Norwegian newcomers.

According to Rasmus Sørensen (1799-1865), some looked upon Wisconsin “as a veritable Eden,”¹² free of the heavy burden of taxes and fees and tithes to a state church or king. Education and learning were “within the reach of all,” said Ole Rynning, one of the first Norwegian immigrants to America, in 1838.¹³ Rynning also said that the American “realizes very well what an advantage the educated man has over the ignorant, and spares nothing in the instruction and education of his children.”¹⁴ Equally impressive to the Norwegian immigrant was the social egalitarianism on the Wisconsin frontier, where even prosperous farmers toiled alongside their hired men in the fields and forests.¹⁵

¹¹ In 1847 the Danish lawyer, Laurits Jacob Friberg, from Copenhagen, Denmark, published a book in Norway entitled: *Haandbog for Emigranter til Amerikas Vest* (Handbook for emigrants to America’s West). Having himself lived in Wisconsin as a farmer since 1843, he felt that “everyone should come to Wisconsin,” because of its more fertile soil which could be readily purchased or claimed and because of its healthier climate.” His optimistic description of Wisconsin created dreams in many minds and some found the land there an answer to their dreams. See Fredrick Hale, *Danes in Wisconsin* (Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1981), 3-8; see also Bovre and Christensen, 4.

¹²Hale, 6.

¹³Ole Rynning, *True Account of America*, 89; quoted in Blegen, “American Transition,” 241.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵Hale, 8.

According to Wisconsin Examination of Title from 1899,¹⁶ the families of Anders Olson and Ole Sørensen¹⁷ arrived in Oakland, Jefferson County, Wisconsin, sometime before July 15, 1850.¹⁸ This is supported by Lawrence W. Onsager who maintains that Ole Serns “purchased eighty acres nearby for one hundred dollars on July 11, 1850.”¹⁹

Oakland is about 110 kilometers due west of Milwaukee and just north of Lake Koshkonong, which is bordered on the east by Jefferson County. In 1850, as stated earlier, 2,670 Norwegians lived in Koshkonong Prairie, Wisconsin, which was 144 square miles in the southeast corner of Dane County. It also included “the southwestern part of Jefferson County, and the northern part of Rock County. The region consisted of small settlements separated by short distances from each other.”²⁰ Koshkonong was well known in Norway, where it was called Koskeland.²¹ That may well have been the reason why Andrew Olsen and Ole Serns choose to move there instead of to the Fox River settlement in Illinois, which represented the initial

¹⁶Jefferson County Abstract Company, Jefferson, WI, Examination of Title, November 1, 1899.

¹⁷From now on their American names will be used throughout the dissertation. Anders Olson’s name will be Andrew Olsen and Ole Sorenson’s name will be Ole Serns.

¹⁸Floyd Serns and Elsie Serns, “Serns Family Saga,” HR-LLU, 19.

¹⁹Lawrence W. Onsager, *The First Norwegian-American Seventh-day Adventist Church in America* (Mauston, WI: Lemonweir Valley Press, 1985), 7.

²⁰Onsager, 6; Bovre and Christensen, 4.

²¹Blegen, “American Transition,” 93.

settlement of Norwegians in America, and the place their friends and relatives had settled one year earlier.

In Oakland, Ole Serns bought 80 acres for \$100²² and Andrew Olsen bought 240 acres.²³ According to Andrew Olsen's son, Martin, his father built a log cabin soon after his arrival. Building homes of wood was familiar to the Norwegian immigrant because of timber-rich Norway. The log cabin was replaced later with a two-story farm house when circumstances allowed.²⁴

Both forest and field yielded good returns during the first years. The same is to be said about their small herds of cattle and other livestock. The year 1853 yielded especially rich produce.²⁵ We may sum up this period of Norwegian immigration to Wisconsin with the words of Blegen:

By the 1860s the earlier Wisconsin settlements, which were founded in the 1830s and 1840s, were already old by frontier standards. Lore and tradition had gathered about Muskego, Jefferson and Rock prairies, and Koshkonong. There fateful Norwegian-American enterprises had been cradled—in church and education, in the press and social life, in politics and war. These communities had struggled through the trying preliminary years of hardship, sickness, and distress. Now they bore the marks of prosperity and triumph, and from them emanated impulses and forces that were spreading over the entire domain of Norwegian-American life.²⁶

²²Serns and Serns, 19.

²³Onsager, 7.

²⁴M. M. Olsen, *Minder og erfaringer* (Memories and experiences) (Copenhagen: Dansk Bogforlag, 1937), 11.

²⁵Nicolai Arnessen Omland to Tellef Nicolaisen Omland, June 4, 1854, quoted in *Agder og America, En Samling gamle Amerikabrev* (Agder [county] and America, Collection of old American letters) (Oslo: H. Aschehoug, 1959) 64, 65.

²⁶Blegen, "American Transition," 485.

Oakland, Wisconsin: “Here Began Our Christian Experience”

As already mentioned, Andrew Olsen referred to the beginnings of the Norwegian Seventh-day Adventist Church as “that little beginning in Norway and later in Wisconsin, Oakland” which grew “into a mighty work.”²⁷ He further mentioned a special religious experience which took place “some little time after settling in America.” He said that “Norwegian Methodists began a series of meetings in the village of Cambridge, five miles from our home.” Olsen said further that they attended these meetings and that “here began our Christian experience.”²⁸ Olsen must be referring to his personal change of heart or Christian conversion, the difference between a living faith and the dead formalism back home in Norway. He must have gained a clear conception of the mission of Jesus Christ as his personal redeemer. He may not have seen this as clearly in Norway, despite his respect for the Bible.

These first Methodist religious meetings took place in a “schoolhouse”²⁹ in Cambridge “some little time after”³⁰ the Olsen family and the Serns family came to Oakland, America. These meetings, therefore, most likely commenced during their first winter in Oakland, while “Andrew and his wife were still living in their first

²⁷McReynolds, 16.

²⁸Ibid. Their inward yearning for a more biblical religion had started in Norway, leading them to emigrate, but not until they reached Oakland, Wisconsin, did they find and join another church which led them to believer’s baptism. In the sense that baptism marks the formal beginnings of Christian experience, it began here.

²⁹Adriel D. Chilson, *Trial and Triumph on a Western Frontier* (Elko, NV: Heritage Publications, 1976), 50.

³⁰McReynolds, 16.

cabin.”³¹ This would then also be prior to the completion of the Willerup Methodist Episcopal Church building in “the Spring of 1852” in Cambridge, since the meetings were not held in the church building itself in Cambridge, but in a schoolhouse.³²

The memorial stone on the Willerup Methodist Episcopal Church in Cambridge, Wisconsin, reads, “The Oldest Scandinavian Methodist Church in the World, 1851.”³³ The inscription is unique, not because of the claim “oldest,” but because of the denomination it represents. People usually think of the Scandinavians as Lutherans.

The foundation stone of Methodism in Cambridge, Wisconsin, was laid by the Swedish Rev. Carl Peter Argelius, once a pastor of a large Lutheran church in Stockholm, Sweden, who became dissatisfied with the state establishment of religion and found an answer to his quest for greater religious freedom in the United States. Here he was befriended by Rev. O. G. Hedstrom of the famous Methodist Bethelship Church, a converted schooner in New York Harbor, which ministered to sailors and immigrants.³⁴

In the spring of 1850, the Swedish Rev. Argelius arrived on horseback in the Cambridge area. He partially “broke the ground, sowed the seed, and then moved on, preaching Christ in log huts and dugouts wherever he found Scandinavian settlers,”

³¹Chilson, *Trial and Triumph*, 50.

³²*125th Anniversary, Willerup United Methodist Church Cambridge, Wisconsin* (1976), 6.

³³See appendix D.

³⁴*125th Anniversary, Willerup United Methodist Church, Cambridge, Wisconsin* (1976), 6.

thus preparing the ground for a more settled minister to follow. “Shortly after Rev. Argelius left Cambridge, Rev. Wesson Miller, the presiding elder of the Milwaukee Mission district, asked the Methodist Board of Mission in New York City to send a man who could preach in the Norwegian language. Rev. Christian B. Willerup of Denmark answered the call.”³⁵

Christian B. Willerup was born in Copenhagen, Denmark, October 6, 1815. He was ordained an elder at the Methodist Bethelship Church, New York City, October 20, 1850. He then came to Wisconsin to answer the call for a Norwegian-speaking preacher. He arrived at Cambridge in November 1850, or only about four months after Olsen and Serns.³⁶

The “series of meetings in the village of Cambridge,” conducted by Norwegian Methodists some five miles from the homes of Andrew Olsen and Ole Serns, must have considerably strengthened the Methodist work initiated by Argelius and continued by Willerup. By 1851 Willerup could report to the Methodist Episcopal Church missionary society that during these meetings many “hungry people walked to church five or six miles, even in stormy weather” to hear the word of God. In April of the same year he organized the church. On May 3, still the same year “it was incorporated at Madison” with “52 members.” By 1854, when Willerup was transferred to Racine, the Cambridge Methodist Church had 233 members.³⁷

³⁵Ibid., 6.

³⁶Ibid., 5.

³⁷Ibid., 5-7.

While Rev. Willerup was still pastor of the Cambridge church, he led an ambitious building project of a stone church of forty-four by sixty-five feet, which was dedicated July 21, 1852. On completing that project, Willerup translated the book of Methodist Discipline into Norwegian and invited people to come and “learn about church doctrine and practice.” The fact that the booklet was translated into Norwegian implies that the majority of Methodists at Cambridge and in the surrounding areas were Norwegians. In this environment “began our Christian experience,” said Andrew Olsen.³⁸

According to Adriel Chilson, the subject the Norwegian Methodists presented at the meetings in the Cambridge schoolhouse was salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, evidenced by conversion by the Holy Spirit. The subject made such a deep impression on Andrew Olsen that he pondered: “What does it mean to be saved? How can I know if I am saved?”³⁹

Through Methodism Andrew Olsen received a clear understanding of the atonement of Jesus Christ and the sanctification of everyday life by the Holy Spirit. The penitent was conditioned to learn from those whom God had ordained at this time to teach his truth of salvation. Christ had performed the work of revelation and conviction through his earthly Methodist servants. Andrew Olsen now experienced the striking evidence of the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit to convict men of sin and salvation. He was thus brought directly into the presence of Christ where his “Christian experience” began.⁴⁰

³⁸McReynolds, 16.

³⁹Chilson, *Trial and Triumph*, 50.

⁴⁰McReynolds, 16.

Late one night Andrew Olsen entered his little cabin home in the woods where his wife Bertha Olsen was waiting to hear all that was said during the meetings. He told her that the meetings had been very important and proceeded to tell her about his fresh understanding of Christian salvation and conversion. He said that the Methodists simply understood conversion to mean “turning around” or “a change in our habits of living.” He continued by quoting the apostle Peter when he said that all had to “repent and be converted.” Although it was late at night Bertha and Andrew Olsen continued to talk and read Scriptures, such as the promise of John 6:37 which says: “He that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.” Having talked, meditated, and prayed for a while Bertha Olsen asked her husband: “Is there any reason to wait longer?” Upon that question they knelt together and “surrendered their lives and future to God.”⁴¹

According to Chilson, Andrew Olsen and his wife “wondered if God had a purpose in their coming to America. They wondered if He had a work for them to do, work similar to the work he had given to Noah. They felt the presence of angels with them, and that they were about to enter upon a new life.” Chilson also said that “during the next few weeks, the salvation of their children was uppermost in their mind.” They wanted “their home to be just what a Christian home should be.”⁴²

Since Bertha Olsen was now a convert to the Christian faith it became her privilege to instruct her children in sound and sensible biblical piety. “Mother Olsen took them one by one, read and explained the Bible, and prayed with them until they

⁴¹Chilson, *Trial and Triumph*, 50.

⁴²*Ibid.*

understood, and gave their hearts to Jesus.”⁴³ Thus the word of God became the rule by which the godly mother guided her children. The sacred oracles were to be to them a constant reminder of the blessing of doing God's will so that they would be kept pure in speech and unsullied by the evil influences by which they were surrounded. Martin M. Olsen, the third son of the Olsens, reminisced: “For my parents the most important goal was not to work hard and get rich. The most important question to them was: How can we bring up our children for the Lord?”⁴⁴

Ole Anders, the eldest son of Andrew and Bertha Olsen, “took longer” to make up his mind than the rest of the children, “but Mother was patient and understanding.” One day as Ole Anders Olsen was working he heard a voice plainly saying to him: “Your sins are forgiven.” This was the beginning of his Christian experience and his faithful, steadfast, and true ministry for the later Seventh-day Adventist Church.⁴⁵

From then on the “belief and experience” of the families of Andrew Olsen and Ole Serns remained “in common with the Methodist Episcopal Church” for about four years.⁴⁶ Andrew Olsen continued by saying: “Now we took up the study of Scriptures anew, and with increased interest, and it was not long before the question of the Sabbath began seriously to exercise our mind.”⁴⁷

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴M. M. Olsen, 2, 3.

⁴⁵Chilson, *Trial and Triumph*, 50.

⁴⁶McReynolds, 16.

⁴⁷Ibid.

The Reappearance of the Sabbath Question in Oakland

After the arrival of other family members and friends from the Fox River Settlement to Oakland, Wisconsin, the question of the seventh-day Sabbath re-emerged. In 1854 the families of Ola Sørensen Øvland, Søren Olson Øvland (Loe), Bertor Olson Øvland, and Tarald Jensen Fiskaa moved from the Fox River settlement in Illinois (where they had lived since 1849) to join their relatives and friends in Oakland Township.⁴⁸ They did not settle in Oakland Township itself, but in Sumner Township, which bordered Oakland Township on the south side.⁴⁹

After the arrival of the four above-mentioned families in the neighborhood of Olsen and Serns in Oakland Township, these farmers one Sunday morning attended the Methodist Church, where they noticed that the minister called Sunday “the holy Sabbath” in his sermon.⁵⁰ The farmers felt that he had struck a false chord, because they well-remembered the solemn words they had heard about the seventh-day Sabbath from Scriptures back home in Norway. This incident in the church re-ignited “that little beginning in Norway,” which from then on continued to grow.

⁴⁸Louis Martin Halswick, “The Advent Message and Its Progress among Danish-Norwegian People in America” (unpublished manuscript, Andrews University, 1959, CAR), 4; cf. O. A. Johnson (a son of Tarald Jensen Fiskaa), in the Danish-Norwegian church paper *Missionæren* (The missionary), 1917.

⁴⁹From now on the names of these individuals will be written according to their American names: Ola Sørensen Øvland will be Ola Serns, Søren Olson Øvland will be Sern Loe, Bertor Olson Øvland will be Bertor Olsen, and Tarald Jensen Fiskaa will be Tarel F. Johnson. Usually, in after years, the Norwegian surnames like “Øvland” and “Fiskaa” were not used in America. Such surnames were often the names of the farms on which they lived in Norway and therefore were not applicable in America. See Blegen, “American Transition,” 132.

⁵⁰Halswick, 2.

It is somewhat difficult to date when this renewed interest in the Sabbath question began. Its roots may reach as far back as 1850. Most likely, however, it began after the arrival of the family members and friends in the early autumn of 1854, because Andrew Olsen says that when they “took up the study of Scriptures anew . . . with increased interest . . . it was not long before the question of the Sabbath began seriously to exercise our minds.” Olsen continued by saying that the real “investigation” of the Sabbath began in the autumn of 1854 and “continued all the winter.”⁵¹ This then was very soon after the arrival of the four families of relatives and friends from the Fox River settlement in the late summer of 1854.

Andrew Olsen then mentioned a certain “neighbor, who in Norway had been part in the Sabbath agitation there,” as “wrestling with the same convictions” at this time. There are only three possibilities as to who this wrestling neighbor might have been, since this neighbor participated in the Sabbath agitation in Norway. This neighbor may have been Olsen’s next-door neighbor, Ole Serns, who left for the United States in 1850 together with Andrew Olsen and who may have had Sabbath interests as early as 1839; or his newly arrived neighbor to the south, Tarel F. Johnson, whose farm in Norway was used as a gathering place for the presentation of the Sabbath there; or Sern Loe who had also just arrived in Sumner Township, Wisconsin, from the Fox River Settlement, and had settled just south of Andrew Olsen’s farm.⁵²

⁵¹Quoted in McReynolds, 16.

⁵²The expression “the third angel’s message” is borrowed from Francis Christian Johnson when he in 1859 described the message he heard on his father’s farm in 1848, when the Swede Nylund paid them a visit. See chapter 1, page 67.

The most likely possibility—according to M. M. Olsen, a son of Andrew Olsen—is that this neighbor of his father was Sern Loe who was also the brother-in-law of Andrew Olsen, and whose farm bordered that of Andrew Olsen's. M. M. Olsen said that the property of his uncle [Sern Loe] and of his father "each bordered the other's. That gave occasion for my father and my uncle to talk quite a lot about what they had heard about the Sabbath."⁵³

Still another son of Andrew Olsen, Ole A. Olsen, confirmed in May 1908 what his brother said above. He said that his "father together with my mother and uncle Søren Loe [same as Sern Loe] and his wife began keeping holy the Sabbath of the Lord early in the spring of 1855."⁵⁴ He also stated that others later united with them in doing so.

A local newspaper sums the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Oakland, Wisconsin, by saying that the little church at Oakland came into being as the result of a seed sown in Sern Loe's mind while he still lived in Norway. The seed was sown when Loe was having dinner in his home with a guest who had said during the conversation that the real Sabbath was the seventh day of the week. This statement impressed Loe so much that he determined to investigate the matter on his own. After Sern Loe moved to the USA and then to Oakland, Wisconsin, he, Andrew Olsen, Ole Serns, and Tarel Johnson, all from the same district in Norway, joined the Methodist Church, and soon began keeping the seventh day as the Sabbath of the

⁵³M. M. Olsen, 10. See appendix B for a map of the area.

⁵⁴*ML*, xiii, xiv.

Lord.⁵⁵ This seems to indicate that Sern Loe was one of the very first ones to develop an interest for the Sabbath. The article is also in harmony with other main sources describing the above mentioned farmers as the exact same Norwegian pioneers who investigated the seventh-day Sabbath and kept it, after they had arrived in Oakland and Sumner.

In 1925, Mahlon Ellsworth Olsen, grandson of Andrew Olsen, and son of O. A. Olsen, recounted the beginning of Sabbath-keeping at Oakland among the Norwegians in his book *Origin and Progress of the Seventh-day Adventists*. Here he states that “Tarel Johnson” and Sern Loe “had made acquaintance of Gustav Melberg [*sic*, Mellberg], a Swede, who was observing the Sabbath.”⁵⁶ Based on his memory, he maintained that the four families of Johnson, Loe, Serns, and Olsen reached their decision “toward the end of the year 1854” after “a prayerful study of the Word” to keep the Sabbath “even though it should involve the severing of their church connection.” M. E. Olsen continued: “With the arrival of spring they reached their decision, and held their first Sabbath meeting about Easter in the house of Andrew Olsen, there being besides his own family, Søren Loe [the same as Sern Loe] and his wife, thus making four adults.”⁵⁷ Then he makes the following peculiar observation: “Tarel Johnson [*sic*] and Andrew Serns had already begun to observe the day, but were not at this meeting.”⁵⁸

⁵⁵Janesville, WI, *Gazette*, July 9, 1974.

⁵⁶ M. E. Olsen, *Origin and Progress of the Seventh-day Adventists* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1925), 346.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁸M. E. Olsen, 346. There was no Andrew Serns among these four farmers who left Norway in 1849 and 1850, except the son of Ole Hegland Serns. Since the

This is somewhat supported by Tarel's son, O. A. Johnson, who thought it was his father Tarel F. Johnson and Ole Hegland Serns who were the first to begin keeping the Sabbath about the autumn of 1855 through the influence of the Sabbath-keeping Lutheran pastor Gustaf Mellberg.⁵⁹ O. A. Johnson said that it was "in the next spring [1856] that my uncle, Andrew Olsen, began to keep the Sabbath." O. A. Johnson admitted, in 1917, that this is "as far as I can remember."⁶⁰ Johnson's dating of the events is accurate as to his father's and Serns' commencement of observing the Sabbath (i.e., in the fall of 1855), but not concerning his uncle Andrew Olsen's and Loe's beginning to keep the Sabbath, according to other sources referred to above and below.

above mentioned Serns is the head of the Serns family and therefore one of the four original immigrant farmers, his real name was Ole Hegland Serns. Louis Halswick also referred to one of these farmers as "Andrew Searns." See his *Missions-erfaringer fra Nybyggerlivet i Amerika* (Mission experiences from the life of settlers in America) (Brookfield, IL: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., n.d.), 44. On page 57 in the same book his name is spelled Andrew Serns. On page 52, he calls him Ole Serns. Ole Serns' first-born child was Anders born in 1828 and called Andrew in America. See chapter 1. Ole Serns died only two years after he began keeping the Sabbath, June 14, 1857. It is probable that those writing about the commencement of Sabbath-keeping by these four farmers several decades later did not remember every name correctly or mixed some of them up.

⁵⁹Gustaf Mellberg and his role as to Sabbath-keeping among Norwegians will be discussed later.

⁶⁰Johnson, *Missionnæren*, 1917.

Before some of these four families commenced to keep the Sabbath, they “tried to console” themselves “with the thought that the [Methodist] ministers who seemed so greatly blessed and in possession of the Holy Spirit’s power must know, if the keeping of Sunday was not right.” “They surely must understand it,” assumed Andrew Olsen with the others. Olsen continued, “The outcome of this was that we together decided to give the question as thorough an examination as was in our power, thus to assure ourselves as to what was right in the matter.” This led to the intensive Sabbath investigation in the autumn of 1854 that lasted all through the winter as mentioned above. “The result was that we became fully convinced of the truth—that there is but one Sabbath ordained by God, and that is the seventh day.”⁶¹

Then of course arose the question as to what to do with the results of their investigation. Their conclusion was, said Olsen, citing Acts 5:29: “We must obey God rather than man.” On that basis alone they decided to keep the seventh-day Sabbath from then on. In this connection Andrew Olsen emphasizes that at this time of their intensive investigation “we were not acquainted with the Seventh-day Adventists, neither had we the assistance of papers or publications bearing on the subject. We had the Bible; that was all, and that was enough.”⁶²

According to Andrew Olsen himself, he and his wife and his brother-in-law Sern Loe and his wife began to keep the seventh-day Sabbath “about Easter time in

⁶¹McReynolds, 16.

⁶²McReynolds, 16. The Seventh-day Adventist Church had not yet been legally organized at the time of Andrew’s investigations of the Sabbath question. Legal organization was completed in 1863. This interview, however, took place around 1908, long after the formal establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

1855.” Therefore, according to Andrew Olsen himself, his “neighbor, who in Norway had had part in the Sabbath agitation there” and “was wrestling with the same conviction” about the Sabbath, must most likely have been his brother-in-law as his son, M. M. Olsen, stated above.⁶³

This is also the understanding of Hannah Swart in her book *Koshkonong Country: A History of Jefferson County, Wisconsin*. Swart wrote: “In the official church history it mentions that the first person to seriously consider observing the Sabbath on the seventh day was a man by the name Sern Loe.”⁶⁴ She goes on to say that “Loe, together with the families of Andrew Olsen, Ole Hegland Serns and Tarel Johnson . . . after some reflection . . . looked deeper into the Adventist doctrine”⁶⁵ of the Sabbath, resulting in “the first meeting held at the home of Andrew Olsen” in the “spring of 1855” where only “two families were in attendance” (i.e., Andrew Olsen and Sern Loe as mentioned above).⁶⁶ This harmonizes with Andrew’s own statement when he said: “It was about Easter time in 1855, when we decided to keep the Sabbath, and the first meeting was attended by four adults, myself and my wife, my brother-in-law Soren Loe, and his wife,”⁶⁷ or two families as Hanna Swart states.⁶⁸ O.

⁶³McReynolds, 16.

⁶⁴Swart, 219.

⁶⁵Swart is obviously using the word “Adventist” in its later application, meaning Seventh-day Adventist.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷McReynolds, 16; Swart, 219.

⁶⁸Swart, 219.

A. Olsen, a son of Andrew Olsen, also claims that to begin with there were “only two families to meet on the Sabbath of the Lord.”⁶⁹

O. A. Johnson said: “My father [Tarel F. Johnson] started to keep the Sabbath during the fall of 1855. As far as I can remember Ole Hegland Serns also began keeping the Sabbath about the same time.”⁷⁰ This is in harmony with Andrew Olsen’s claim above. This also confirms that the two families who began keeping the Sabbath in the spring of 1855 must have been Andrew Olsen and Sern Loe or the other two farmers of the four. According to Olsen soon “eight large families were united in the observance of the Lord’s Sabbath” in the autumn and the early winter of 1855.⁷¹

“Serns’ Family Saga” also states that the “first Sabbath meeting” was held “in the home of Andrew Olsen” in 1855.⁷² Chilson concluded: “In the shade of the oaks of Oakland, four large Norwegian families were keeping the Sabbath as a result of their own Bible study.”⁷³

So happy were some of the Olsen’s children with keeping the Sabbath that Martin M. Olsen remembered that “once in the middle of the week my brother E. G. [Edward Gunder Olsen] and I were some distance away from home and one said to

⁶⁹Ole A. Olsen, “Sandhedens Fremgang blant Skandinaverne” (The progress of the truth among Scandinavians) *Advent Tidende* (Advent tidings) no. 8 (1877): 269.

⁷⁰Johnson, *Missionnæren*, 1917.

⁷¹McReynolds, 16. Andrew Olsen who made the statement about the number of the families who began keeping the Sabbath in 1855 does not give us their names. This was before his brother arrived with his family and mother who were numbered with the seven families who immigrated to USA.

⁷²Serns and Serns, 21, 28.

⁷³Chilson, *Trial and Triumph*, 18.

the other, ‘I wish we had Friday night twice a week.’ We thought there was too much time between each.”⁷⁴

Andrew Olsen thought that the “newfound truth” was so precious that “it could not be kept in the background,” hence he and his wife, and his brother-in-law and his wife decided to share “the truth” with their “former associates in the Methodist Episcopal Church, and one after another accepted the light until we became a goodly number.”⁷⁵

When Olsen talks about his “former associates in the Methodist Episcopalian Church” he seems to confirm that he himself and his wife belonged officially, for a while, to the Methodist Episcopal Church at Cambridge. His brother-in-law Sern Loe and his wife belonged to the Methodist Episcopal Church at Cambridge all their lives and were buried in the church’s cemetery.⁷⁶ Martin M. Olsen, son of Andrew Olsen, confirms that his uncle Sern Loe was “a Methodist.”⁷⁷ Loe’s gravestone in the churchyard of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Cambridge confirms that he was buried as a Methodist. He was, however, a “Seventh-day Methodist” at least for a while, as the Sabbath-keepers in that church were called for some time.⁷⁸ Said Andrew: “Our belief and experience were in common with the Methodist Episcopal

⁷⁴M. M. Olsen, 6.

⁷⁵McReynolds, 16.

⁷⁶See picture (gravestone) in appendix B.

⁷⁷M. M. Olsen, 12.

⁷⁸McReynolds, 16.

Church with the exception of the Sabbath, and people began to call us Seventh-day Methodists.”⁷⁹

Soon storms of opposition gathered on the horizon. Christian Willerup and two other ministers came to Oakland to bring the Sabbath-keepers to reason and make them see their error and renounce their newfound truth.⁸⁰ According to Gustaf Mellberg, who lived only a mile from Andrew Olsen and was himself very interested in the Sabbath question, Willerup was extremely unhappy with the situation, because the most influential people of his parish were espousing these new ideas. Willerup consequently suggested that the congregation could keep the Jewish Sabbath provided they also kept Sunday.⁸¹ Said Andrew Olsen: “Ministers visited us from the Methodist Episcopal Church, and tried to show us our error, but their efforts only confirmed us the more in the truth; for we saw that they could produce no evidence from the Scripture that the keeping of Sunday was ordained by the Lord.”⁸²

The real effect of these discussions was only to make the truth more plain, leading more people to keep “the Lord’s Sabbath, the seventh day.” According to Olsen, “The good work continued until eight large families were united in the observance of the Lord’s Sabbath.”⁸³

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰M. M. Olsen, 11.

⁸¹Gustaf Mellberg, “Communications,” *RH*, February 20, 1855, 183.

⁸²McReynolds, 16. After Willerup left Cambridge late in 1854, five men filled the pulpit until 1861: Halvor Garden, Nils Olsen, Nils Johnson, E. Steenson, and O. Helland. Most of them were trained by Willerup himself (see *125th Anniversary, Willerup United Methodist Church, Cambridge, Wisconsin* [1976], 7).

⁸³McReynolds, 16.

Lawrence W. Onsager has suggested who the “eight” or more families, referred to by Andrew Olsen, might have been. He bases his findings on death announcements and necrologies in the local newspaper, *Jefferson County Union*, and in the *Review and Herald*, together with information from the librarian Gerhard Naeseth at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. The list is as follows:

1. Andrew and Berte Olsen
2. Halvor (brother of Andrew Olsen) and Åse (Orra) Olsen, his wife
3. Susannah Olsen (mother of Andrew and Halvor) ⁸⁴
4. Søren and Bertha Loe
5. Tarel (F. Johnson) and his wife Todne (Todne was the sister of Berte, the wife of Andrew Olsen)
6. Ole and Inger (Serns) Thompson and their son Andrew Serns
7. Sern and Sarah Serns and Christian and Inger Thompson (Inger is the daughter of Ole and Inger Serns)
8. An unidentified couple. ⁸⁵

⁸⁴This list includes the husband and wife Halvor and Åse Olson (also named Olsen) and his mother Susanne Olsen. Since they are included it should be noted that they did not arrive in the United States of America until the autumn of 1856. According to the local Norwegian church protocol for Finsland they (Halvor and Åse Olse, and Susanne Olsen) were discharged from the church on March 4, 1856. They may have become Sabbath-keepers after coming to the States. See *Kirkebøker: Finsland, A-2 1816-1869* (Statsarkivet Kristiansand), 587. Hence the eight families referred to by Andrew Olsen cannot be the same eight as in this list. It should also be noted that the list refers to ten distinct families although some are more related to one another than the rest. The list provided by Onsager must therefore be of people who joined in keeping the Sabbath sometime after the autumn of 1856 and before the early months of 1858 or probably during 1857. Certainly by the end of 1855 at least four of these families had begun keeping the Sabbath.

⁸⁵Onsager, 34. Francis C. Johnson, a son of Tarel F. Johnson, began keeping the Sabbath in 1857. See *RH*, March 17, 1859.

Compared with the original list of the seven families listed in chapter 1, Andrew Olsen is rightfully included on both lists, and so is his brother Halvor. Their mother is listed as a separate family by Onsager; however, she is not listed as such in chapter 1, since she was a widow. Soren Loe is on the Onsager list and listed with the seven as well. His brother Bertor is listed with the seven, but is not included on the Onsager list. Tarel F. Johnson was with the seven and is listed by Onsager too. Ole Serns is listed with the seven, but his two sons Sern and Andrew are not listed with the seven, but are referred to as separate families by Onsager. Ola Sorenson Ovland is not on the Onsager list, his son Soren Loe is on the list as mentioned above, but his son Bertor is not on the Onsager list. Both these brothers immigrated to USA with their families and are included with the seven in chapter 1. Hence all the names on the Onsager list are valid provided that the list is not limited to the year 1855 and that Andrew Serns and Sern Serns are married men at this time, which is likely since Andrew was born in 1828 and Serns in 1830.⁸⁶

Andrew Olsen does not give the exact date when these eight families were united in Sabbath-keeping in Oakland. The date may have been somewhat later than by the end of 1855. If the names provided by Onsager are to be accepted without reservation it must be pointed out here that Halvor Olsen and his wife Åsa, and Halvor's mother Susanne Olsen, did not leave Norway before March 1856, hence they arrived in the United States of America sometime during the summer or autumn

⁸⁶See chapter 1, page 55.

of the same year.⁸⁷ According to Francis C. Johnson, son of Tarel F. Johnson, there were twenty Sabbath-keeping Adventists by March 1859 in Oakland.⁸⁸

Andrew Olsen's son Ole A. Olsen remarked about this development:

Thus has this work, which began in such a great weakness, grown. Instead of there being only two families to meet on the Sabbath of the Lord, soon there was a full house of souls sincerely seeking; and instead of going back to the 'Old' which so many talked about, they kept on going forward, and by the grace of God they received light on more truth in the word of God, concerning which they had been in darkness earlier, such as, baptism, the imminent return of the Lord and others. Thus they continued to grow in the grace of God and knowledge.⁸⁹

Lutheran Reactions to Seventh-day Sabbath Observance in Wisconsin

In August 1855 the Lutheran Evangelical Church in America published an article titled, "What Reasons Can Be Given for [the Fact] That the Christian Church Has the First Day of the Week as Sabbath Instead of the Seventh Day?"⁹⁰ The author of the article claimed to have learned from many places that the "lords of the Sabbath"⁹¹ or the Seventh Day Baptists had now commenced their work among the

⁸⁷*Kirkebøker: Finsland*, A-2 1816-1869, Statsarkivet Kristiansand, 587.

⁸⁸Francis C. Johnson, Letter to [Editor] Uriah Smith, *RH*, March 17, 1859, 134.

⁸⁹Ole A. Olsen, "Sandhedens Fremgang blant Skandinaverne," *Advent Tidende* no. 8 (1877): 269.

⁹⁰"Hvilken Grunde kan anføres for, at den christelige Kirke har Ugens første Dag som Sabbath isedenfor den syvende dag?" (What reason can be cited for [the fact] that the Christian Church has the first day of the week as Sabbath instead of the seventh day?) *Kirkelig Maanedstidende for de norsk-evangeliske-lutherske Kirke i Amerika* (Ecclesiastical Monthly Journal for the Norwegian-Evangelical-Lutheran Church in America) 1, no. 5 (August 1855): 92.

⁹¹The "lords of the Sabbath" referred to here may very well have included the Sabbath-keeping Adventists who were not yet organized as a church, but who were more active evangelists at this time than the Seventh Day Baptists. Chilson said: "The year 1853 saw another ten churches added to the growing list" in the west. He lists

Scandinavians, even in his own neighborhood, and he was sure they were preparing a more forward thrust in the future. He then presented arguments in favor of observing Sunday, the first day of the week—a tradition which he claimed had been unrefuted in the Christian Church for 1,800 years.

He went on to say that even if he could not find any arguments at all in the Holy Scriptures, in the Gospels, or in the spirit of the Law, or any testimony from the age of the apostles, he would in full confidence subject himself to the unanimous testimony of the believing ancient Christian Fathers.

But now, we have in the sectarian and modern spirits such opponents who think highly of themselves, but who have at the same time such low regard for others, so much so that we should not even offer them a single proof. These shouting, reciting, not even half-educated Yankee-Priests are not afraid of expressing themselves and their opinions against the thoroughly educated Fathers of Old, who were just as familiar with the old Church's language, order, ordinances and decrees, and traditions, as these empty-minded modern Lords are familiar with their own home's stock list, but who at the same time like many others, especially this country's Petty-Forger-Theologians, show little respect for the well-educated and profound men of Old. This stems of course from the fact that they do not know them, and therefore do not know how small they themselves are in comparison to the great Light- and Standard-bearers of the Church.⁹²

the following nine: Alden, Avon, Mackford, Metomen, Monroe, Packwakee, Ripon, Rosendale, and Union. He also said that James White, the editor of the *Review and Herald*, "was deeply impressed with the cause in the west." See Chilson, *Trial and Triumph*, 15. According to *SDAE*, s.v. "Wisconsin Conference," there were by 1880, 54 Seventh-day Adventist churches in Wisconsin.

⁹²"Hvilken Grunde kan anføres for, at den christelige Kirke har Ugens første Dag som Sabbath isedenfor den syvende dag?" (What reason can be cited for [the fact] that the Christian Church has the first day of the week as Sabbath instead of the seventh day?") *Kirkelig Maanedstidende for de norsk-evangeliske-lutherske Kirke i Amerika* (Ecclesiastical Monthly Journal for the Norwegian-Evangelical-Lutheran Church in America) 1, no. 5 (August 1855): 92.

An article with such claims, and without biblical or historical arguments or documentation, made little impression on those who had made the Bible the sole foundation of their faith and practice.

The Role of Gustaf Mellberg

Among a “band of remarkable Swedes who had settled on the north side of Lake Koshkonong” in 1844 were several of so-called “high culture,” including a nobleman Reuterskjold, a Mr. Hammerquist, and Thure Ludvig Kumlien. Among these “highly cultivated men” was Gustaf Mellberg, “a graduate in theology from the University of Lund”⁹³ in Sweden. According to the *1880 United States Federal Census*, he was born about 1812, and married to Julielle at his arrival in the USA. The couple lived in Sumner, Jefferson County, Wisconsin, and had two children: a daughter Gustave Em., and a son Edward.⁹⁴ Mellberg was also “an intimate friend of the poet E. Tegner.” “Half a dozen” of such men of “high culture,” while in “the middle of the Atlantic Ocean,” had “studied a map of the United States and found Koshkonong Lake, in Wisconsin, and decided to go there.”⁹⁵

Gustaf Mellberg was exposed to the Sabbath doctrine by a Sabbath-keeping Adventist, James White, in the summer of 1854.⁹⁶ Mellberg claimed that he

⁹³Anderson, 90.

⁹⁴www.ancestry.com and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *1880 United States Federal Census* [database on-line] (Provo, UT: The Generations Network, 2005).

⁹⁵Anderson, 90, 91.

⁹⁶Gustaf Mellberg, “Communications,” *RH*, February 20, 1855, 183. See also Halswick, *Missions-erfaringer* (Missionary Experiences), 41-57. James White’s full name was James Springer White (1821-1881). A “co-founder of the Seventh-day

afterward had conversations concerning the Sabbath with some Norwegians who lived about two miles from his home. He further said that he strongly urged them to prayerfully study the Scriptures and not just take his word for it, but examine for themselves the matter concerning the Sabbath. This, Mellberg said, resulted in three out of four persons acknowledging the truth and keeping the Sabbath of the Lord, especially after he talked about the Sabbath in the context of the third angel's message in Rev 14.⁹⁷

In the light of the following statement by Andrew Olsen, it is hard to understand the role of Gustaf Mellberg concerning the biblical investigation of the Sabbath among some of the Norwegians. After reporting that "eight large families were united in the observance of the Lord's Sabbath," Andrew Olsen made the following explicit statement: "But as yet we had no connection with the Seventh-day Adventists" and neither did the Norwegians have any Adventist literature on the subject. As Andrew Olsen thus reflected on these crucial events from the past, he neither referred to nor implied a possible role of Gustaf Mellberg. As mentioned earlier, Mellberg had studied to become a pastor in the Lutheran Church in Sweden, but became a Sabbath-keeper in the United States, probably after he met James White

Adventist Church, he was born in Palmyra, Maine, Aug. 4, 1821, in a family of pioneer New England stock. According to White's *Life Incidents* (Battle Creek, MI: SDA Pub. Assn., 1868), 9, his father was a descendant of one of the Pilgrims who came on the ship *Mayflower* which landed at Plymouth Rock in December 1620. Genealogical records published in 1900 trace James's ancestry to the family of John White, of Salem, known to be in New England in 1638. James's mother was a granddaughter of Dr. Samuel Shepard, an eminent Baptist minister of New England." *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 1976 ed., s.v. "White, James Springer."

⁹⁷Gustaf Mellberg, "Communications," *RH*, February 20, 1855, 183. See also Halswick, *Missions-erfaringer* (Missionary Experiences), 41-57.

in June 1854.⁹⁸ Andrew Olsen's claim that they had not seen any Adventist literature was corroborated by Mellberg, because the lack of any Adventist literature in Norwegian was the reason Mellberg wanted White to write a sixteen-page pamphlet on the Sabbath for Mellberg to translate for distribution among the Swedes and Norwegians in Oakland.⁹⁹ On October 11, 1854, White wrote a letter to Mellberg concerning the booklet, but because of illness Mellberg did not respond immediately. White looked upon Mellberg's reply in January 1855 as of such great importance that he published it in the *Review and Herald*. This is the letter in which Mellberg mentioned conversing with Norwegians near his home regarding the Sabbath. Mellberg claimed to have been with the Norwegians the previous Sabbath, which by simple calculation (since the letter is dated in Koshkonong, Wisconsin, January 22, 1855) would have been Sabbath, January 20.¹⁰⁰ This is a much earlier date for the commencement of keeping the seventh-day Sabbath than the one given by Andrew Olsen for him and Serns as mentioned above.

Mellberg's letter also noted that the previous pastor, who had led in the building of the Methodist Church at Cambridge, Wisconsin, had suggested to the

⁹⁸Gustaf Mellberg, "Communications," *RH*, February 20, 1855, 183; McReynolds, 16; Halswick, 5. See also *Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway: A Factual Account*, quoted in Sigmund Skard et al., eds., *Americana Norvegica*, vol. 2—*Norwegian Contributions to American Studies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, University of Oslo, 1968), 77. If Mellberg neither identified himself as a Seventh-day Adventist nor gave the Norwegians any printed literature, they would not have associated him with Adventists or remembered him as an Adventist influence.

⁹⁹It should be noted that Norwegians, Swedes, and Danes can fairly easily understand each others' languages.

¹⁰⁰Mellberg, "Communications," *RH*, February 20, 1855, 183.

Norwegian members that they could keep the Jewish Sabbath, if they at the same time were willing to keep the Christian Sabbath. Needless to say the Norwegian Methodists were not willing to accept such a compromise.¹⁰¹ The previous pastor Mellberg referred to had to be Rev. Christian B. Willerup, who played a leading role in the Methodists' attempt to convert the Norwegians. Willerup served in Cambridge, Wisconsin, from 1850 to 1855, when he moved to Racine, Wisconsin.¹⁰²

According to M. M. Olsen, a son of Andrew Olsen, Willerup and two other Methodist pastors came to Oakland to rebuke the Norwegians and persuade them to give up the Sabbath. But since they could not prove that Sunday was the right Sabbath on the basis of the Bible alone, they had to leave empty-handed and without any success.¹⁰³

It is strange that in the interview mentioned above, Andrew Olsen does not mention Mellberg, if all the claims made by Mellberg are true.¹⁰⁴ Andrew Olsen

¹⁰¹Ibid. Prior to this, the Norwegians had been recognized as Sabbath-keeping Methodists. Perhaps they saw Mellberg as a "Sabbath-keeping Lutheran," and were influenced by the biblical information he shared with him, but did not know it came from Mellberg's contact with Adventists.

¹⁰²Ibid. At that time the membership in the Cambridge church was 233, not 20, as Mellberg's letter stated (as published in the *Review and Herald*). See *125th Anniversary, Willerup United Methodist Church*, 4.

¹⁰³M. M. Olsen, 12.

¹⁰⁴The interview with Andrew Olsen, cited in McReynolds, 16, took place around 1908. One possible reason why Andrew Olsen did not mention Mellberg when Olsen recounted the events leading up to the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath at Easter in 1855, might be that Olsen wanted to emphasize that the only ground of the Norwegians' convictions was their firm faith in the word of God and that they therefore were not influenced by any outside source whatsoever. Because the Bible alone had influenced their final decision, Olsen may have chosen to overlook the role of Mellberg. On the other hand, Mellberg, in his eagerness to impress James White, may have taken credit for convincing the Norwegians of the

categorically stated that their reason for keeping the Sabbath was: “We must obey God rather than man,” not knowing at the time of that decision anything about the Sabbatarian Adventists. He also said that the first ones to keep the Sabbath were two families and not three (i.e., he himself and his wife and his brother-in-law Sern Loe and his wife), and that this took place “about Easter time in 1855”¹⁰⁵ and not earlier as Mellberg seems to indicate.

In another account, Andrew Olsen emphasized that “as yet we had no connection with the Seventh-day Adventists,” hence their Sabbath-keeping was solely the result of their personal intensive Sabbath investigation which began in the autumn of 1854 and lasted through the winter. “The result was,” said Andrew Olsen, “that we became fully convinced of the truth that there is but one Sabbath ordained by God, and that is the seventh day.”¹⁰⁶

In light of Mellberg’s claims, this emphasis by Andrew Olson seems even stranger still when Andrew Olsen said: “We were not acquainted with the Seventh-day Adventists, neither had we the assistance of papers or publications bearing on the subject. We had the Bible; that was all, and that was enough.”¹⁰⁷ The booklet Mellberg wanted to publish was never written by James White and therefore never

Sabbath, when in fact they had already discovered it on their own long before Mellberg came on the scene, that is, already in Norway. The possibility that Mellberg may already have been influenced by the Age-to-Come theory at the time he wrote the letter might also have biased Mellberg’s account. It is noteworthy that Mellberg’s account also differs with that of Olsen as to the time and number of persons who commenced keeping the Sabbath in 1855.

¹⁰⁵M. M. Olsen, 12.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Ibid. See notes 100 and 103, above.

translated by Mellberg, because of some combination of factors including James White's illness, Mellberg's illness, and Mellberg's involvement with the "Age-to-Come" movement in Wisconsin, as will can be seen below.

Dissension in Wisconsin Caused by "Age-to-Come" Preachers: Stephenson and Hall

"The "Age-to-Come" doctrine as held by certain Adventists was not entirely new. It was a variation of nineteenth-century millenarianism, which shared aspects of both postmillennialism and premillennialism. Postmillennialism was based on the perception of a gradual movement of humanity towards societal perfection. This massive religious revival would result in conversion of the entire human race, including the Jews, to Christianity. According to Loraine Boettner, postmillennialism is "that view of last things which holds that the Kingdom of God is now being extended in the world through the preaching of the Gospel and the saving work of the Holy Spirit, that the world eventually is to be Christianized, and that the return of Christ will occur at the close of a long period of righteousness and peace, commonly called the *Millennium*."¹⁰⁸

Somewhat in common with postmillennialism, most of the believers in the "Age-to-Come" teaching held that the Second Advent would usher in a millennial kingdom during which probation would continue and the nations would be converted under the reign of Christ and the saints, and during which the Jews would play a leading role.

¹⁰⁸Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1984), 4.

By contrast the Adventists taught, following William Miller (1782-1849), that by the Second Advent, the fate of every human being would be decided, and the kingdom established at that time by Christ would include only his immortalized saints. Christ's return would thus "inaugurate the millennium—a view designated as premillennialism."¹⁰⁹ The theological term "premillennialism" did not come into general use until the mid-nineteenth century. Those who coined the word were "almost entirely British and American Protestants."¹¹⁰ According to Professor P. Gerard Damsteegt, William Miller, the father of Adventism was the "principal exponent of premillennialism in America" during the early part of the nineteenth century.¹¹¹

After quoting Dan 2:44, "the God of heaven [shall] set up a kingdom, which shall . . . stand for ever," Miller wrote the following against postmillennialism: "Different sects and partisans have seized this text, and applied it to their sect, and proved, as they verily believe, that their sect is the true kingdom of God, which will stand forever." Catholics, Baptists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Quakers,

¹⁰⁹P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: William B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 13, 30, 31.

¹¹⁰Robert K. Whalen, "Premillennialism," *The Encyclopedia of Millennialism and Millennial Movements*, ed. Richard A. Landes (New York: Routledge, 1948), 200, 331.

¹¹¹Damsteegt, 13.

Methodists, Shakers, and Mormons, all “seem determined to have an earthly kingdom, and an earthly head to that kingdom.”¹¹²

Their spiritual reign and conversion of the world has been their hobby, and they hug to the foolish idea of converting the world with their dogmas and faith, by means of money and sectarian missionaries. As well may they undertake to dip the ocean dry with a fireman’s bucket, as to convert the world with their sectarian motives and party creeds. How can men be so ignorant as not to see, that every convert only makes the rent worse, and that every year divisions and subdivisions increase? Can a kingdom thus torn and divided stand for “millions of years,” as one of the sectarian editors lately proclaimed, and our dear Saviour be correct? Matt. xii. 25: “And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.” We know they cannot be true.¹¹³

¹¹²William Miller, *Kingdom of God* (Boston, MA: Joshua V. Himes, 1842), 4. Miller explained how and why the above mentioned religious institutions made their claims: “Much has been said and written on this by different commentators. Different sects and partisans have seized this text [Daniel 2:44], and applied it to their sect, and proved, as they verily believe, that their sect is the true kingdom of God, which will stand forever. The Catholics say it was set up in the days of the Cæsars (Constantine I, the great (c. 272– 337) of the Roman Empire, Theodosius I, the great (347-395) of the Roman Empire, Justinian I, the great of the Roman Empire, Clovis (c. 466-511) the cornerstone of the Holy Roman Empire, Pepin the Short (714-768) of the Holy Roman Empire, Charlemagne the great (742-814), of the Holy Roman Empire, etc.) and thus claim for the Pope St. Peter’s chair and the kingdom, and that to the Bishop of Rome were the keys of this kingdom given at the demise of St. Peter, and the popes have been the successors and earthly head of this kingdom ever since. The Baptist writers, many of them, say the same, and claim a descent from the apostles for the Baptist church, making what the Catholics do the Pope; and try to show a regular succession of the church, as the Catholics do their popes. They also claim believer’s baptism (*immersion*,) as an initiatory rite into the kingdom, and that none are citizens of this kingdom until they comply with this registration. The Episcopalians, or some of them, claim the same kingdom to have been set up in the days of the kings of England; and therefore the kings and queens of England are accredited head of the episcopacy, and ruler over the visible church. The Presbyterians say it was set up in the days of Luther, among the German kings, the Quakers, in the days of Fox; the Methodists, in the days of Wesley; the Shakers, in the days of Ann Lee; and the Mormons, by Joseph Smith.” Miller, *Kingdom of God*, 3, 4.

¹¹³Miller, *Kingdom of God*, 21, 22.

Thus the “postmillennialists were optimistic about the human ability to gradually transform the secular world into an ideal society in which the principles of the kingdom of God would triumph.”¹¹⁴ On the other hand, the premillennialists had generally “a pessimistic view on the conditions of society and man’s attempts to improve it. They felt that only the cataclysmic return of Jesus Christ could bring about the perfect society of the millennium.”¹¹⁵ Concerning this, Miller said: “We also learn by this why so many of our D.D.’s and professors, so many of our Rev.’s and clergy, so many of our editors and Christian teachers, as they wish to call them, are so strongly opposed to this doctrine” of premillennialism.¹¹⁶

Believers in the “Age-to-Come” theory held, in common with premillennialists, that the Second Advent would precede the millennium; but like postmillennialists, they believed that during the millennium, under the reign of Christ and the saints, probation would continue until all the nations would be converted.

After the Millerite disappointment in 1844, J. V. Himes and the majority party of the Millerites rejected the “Age-to-Come” theory of the millennium as incompatible with Adventism. Sabbatarian Adventists found it equally incompatible with their beliefs, especially when it was connected with a denial of the Sabbath. This view called forth articles and books in reply, such as J. N. Andrews’ articles on the

¹¹⁴Damsteegt, 14.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶Miller, *Kingdom of God*, 21.

Sabbath and J. H. Waggoner's *The Kingdom of God: A Refutation of the Age-to-Come* (1859).¹¹⁷

The leaders of the "Age-to-Come" group were J. M. Stephenson and D. P. Hall, converts of J. H. Waggoner who had himself become an Adventist in 1852. Soon after their conversion Stephenson and Hall began preaching in Wisconsin for the Sabbath-keeping Adventists. They were ordained to the gospel ministry together with Waggoner in March 1852.¹¹⁸ In 1853 Stephenson and Hall embraced the "Age-to-Come" theory of the millennium. "Their burden was that man's opportunity for salvation continues on during the 'age to come' (that is, during the millennium) a belief which earned them the name, 'The Age-to-Come Party.'"¹¹⁹

In 1854 James White decided to visit Wisconsin, because of the dissension there caused by the Age-to-Come preaching of Stephenson and Hall. After weekend conferences in Koshkonong in May and Rosendale in June, James White secured the promise from Stephenson and Hall to cease preaching the Age-to-Come theory.¹²⁰

It was apparently during this very month of June that James White and Gustaf Mellberg met, discussed the Sabbath question, and decided that a booklet should be written on the subject of the Sabbath especially for the Norwegians. This was also the very year that Sern Loe arrived in Oakland, and he and Andrew Olsen resumed

¹¹⁷*SDAE*, s.v. "Premillennialism." See also "Andrews, John Nevins" (1829–1883) and "Waggoner, Joseph Harvey" (1820–1889) in *SDAE*.

¹¹⁸M. E. Olsen, 231.

¹¹⁹Maxwell, 135.

¹²⁰Chilson, *Trial and Triumph*, 16.

their discussion, begun in Norway, regarding the Sabbath.

But soon after the departure of Elder White, Stephenson and Hall began again to publicly “teach their theories, to the grief and confusion of many of the believers in Wisconsin and the serious retarding of the work.”¹²¹ “During the next twelve months Stephenson and Hall were intensively engaged in traveling, preaching, and writing,” but at the Adventist headquarters “there was little awareness” of the content of their preaching. Encouraged with their success and Stephenson’s articles on the atonement being published in the *Review and Herald*, Stephenson wrote an “article which incorporated views of a second chance for sinners” during “Christ’s reign on earth during the millennium.” Editor James White rejected the article.¹²²

In the spring of 1855 Stephenson made a trip to Rochester, New York, to see James White and ask him for an evangelistic tent. On the strength of Stephenson’s renewed promise not to present the Age-to-Come view, White borrowed money to outfit Stephenson with a tent for evangelism in Wisconsin. But as soon as Stephenson and Hall were back in Wisconsin, their “team went throughout the state poisoning the minds of the Sabbath-keepers against the *Review*.” In June 1855, after a vision Oswego, New York, Ellen G. White “instructed them [the brethren at *Review and Herald*] not to reply to the charges any longer, but to devote their time and energy to proclaiming ‘truth, present truth.’” By October 1855, Stephenson had openly allied himself with another dissident voice, the *Messenger of Truth*.¹²³

¹²¹M. E. Olsen, 231.

¹²²Chilson, *Trial and Triumph*, 16.

¹²³E. G. White quoted in Maxwell, 135; Chilson, *Trial and Triumph*, 16.

The Messenger Party

The very first defection from the Sabbath-keeping Adventists began at Jackson, Michigan, in June 1853, when two more or less self-appointed ministers, H. S. Case and C. P. Russell, left the Sabbath-keeping Adventists because of Ellen White's reproof given them for their harsh spirit toward an Adventist woman who had spoken impatiently to her neighbor.¹²⁴ Case and Russell soon began publishing a new journal, the *Messenger of Truth*, whose supporters were therefore called "the Messenger Party." So severe was their criticism of James White's leadership that when he became sick, they "made merry over his malaise, citing it as the crowning evidence that God would soon take him out of the way."¹²⁵

At the beginning, Stephenson and Hall condemned Russell and Case. Boasted Stephenson in 1855: "My sympathies are all with the Review. It is that paper or none with me. I cannot affiliate with the spirit or doctrines of the Messenger of "Error."¹²⁶ But later, Stephenson and Hall also rejected James White's leadership and Ellen G. White's visions, and consequently joined Russell and Case's Messenger Party.

The damage caused by the Messenger Party and its Age-to-Come auxiliary must have been considerable in Wisconsin, because in October 1855, in El Dorado and Koshkonong, Stephenson openly attacked James White, characterized the *Review* as sectarian, and withdrew all the support he had previously promised the Whites.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ SDAE, s.v. "Messenger Party."

¹²⁵ Maxwell, 135.

¹²⁶ "The Extra," RH, February 20, 1855, 197.

¹²⁷ J. H. Waggoner, "The Age to Come," RH, December 11, 1855, 84, 85.

From then on he openly supported the Messenger Party and promoted his theology in their journal *Messenger of Truth*.¹²⁸ Elder J. H. Waggoner was so “crushed with discouragement” because of the harmful influence of the Messenger Party and the Age-to-Come groups in Wisconsin on the Sabbatarian Adventists that he left the ministry and took up manual labor for a time.¹²⁹

The Messenger Party and its Age-to-Come auxiliary “did dissolve in due course,”¹³⁰ but the damage done in Wisconsin was so devastating that James White reported in the *Review* in January 1858 that the “cause in Wisconsin is almost a total wreck.”¹³¹ In March 1858 Waggoner returned to Wisconsin and sent this report to the *Review and Herald*:

According to request, the brethren made arrangements for our meeting at Koshkonong, Jefferson Co. Words cannot express my feelings returning to that place after an absence of over three years. Time was when the leaven of the Third Angel’s Message pervaded almost the entire community. Parents and children united their voices at the altar of prayer. The Spirit of God deeply impressed the truth on willing hearts. Their meetings were characterized by fervent prayer and exhortations. But now, how changed! Though many retained a belief of the message, the family altars were broken down; and the meetings when held, attended by few, were scenes of contention and confusion. Had the faithless shepherds, Stephenson and Hall, plotted the downfall of the message from the beginning, they could not have wrought more effectively.¹³²

John G. Matteson said that Stephenson and Hall had some meetings in the vicinity of the Norwegian settlers and visited some of them in their homes in order to

¹²⁸Bjarne Christiansen, “J. M. Stephenson: Theologian of the 1850s” (unpublished paper, Andrews University, 1973), 4, 10.

¹²⁹Chilson, *Trial and Triumph*, 16.

¹³⁰Maxwell, 134.

¹³¹J. White, *RH*, January 14, 1858.

“upset the faith of our brethren,” but without causing any damage.¹³³ That was true of most of the Sabbatarian Adventists at Oakland, but not of all. Stephenson and Hall, perhaps together with Mellberg, may have visited the home of Tarel F. Johnson, since a son of Johnson, along with Mellberg himself, accepted the Age-to-Come understanding as will be shown below, an understanding which also opposed the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath. Hence the question may be asked: Did Stephenson and Hall’s negative attitude to Sabbath-keeping exert perhaps some influence upon Mellberg so that he became drawn for a while in two opposite directions as to whether to keep the Sabbath or not, which never affected Olsen and Loe’s independence and determination to keep the Sabbath?

Francis C. Johnson, the son of Tarel F. Johnson whose home Stephenson and Hall may have visited, was carried away with the Age-to-Come doctrine for a time. He later confessed in a letter to the *Review and Herald*,

It is almost four years since I made up my mind to keep the Sabbath. I kept it in my poor way for about one year before the duty of baptism was presented to me. I received it as the third condition of my salvation, and the step by which I put on Christ; but to my sorrow I have to say that I did not walk as I had received him; for I fought that which I considered to be truth, and embraced the theory of the future age. I became worldly-minded, and I might say dead; but thank God, I was not plucked up by the roots. I spoke hard words against the gift of prophecy which has been manifested in the church, and against the *Review*. I feel to confess all my wrongs to my brethren and friends and ask for their forgiveness. I have confessed my fault to the Lord, and I believe he has forgiven my sins.¹³⁴

¹³²J. H. Waggoner, “Tour in Wisconsin,” *RH*, March 25, 1858.

¹³³John G. Matteson, *Mattesons Liv og Adventbevælsens Begyndelse blandt Skandinaverne* (Life of Matteson and the Beginning of the Advent Movement among Scandinavians) (College View, NE: International Publishing Association, 1908), 121.

¹³⁴Francis C. Johnson, *RH*, March 17, 1859.

Gustaf Mellberg as well was carried away in the dissension caused by Stephenson and Hall and their harsh criticism of the leaders, the literature, and the Sabbath. In 1859, in a spirit of confession, he wrote to the *Review and Herald*:

Brother Smith: *The Review and Herald*, during the past year, has come to me like an old acquainted friend, longed and looked for—always containing some new and valuable information, as well as theory of our blessed faith as in practice and true piety. I feel to praise the Lord for the Spirit manifested in this paper, as well among the editing as the corresponding brethren. God has been favoring his people in this vicinity during the past winter with his Spirit in great measure. We feel gratitude to our heavenly Father, who sent Waggoner, Andrews and Hart this way a year ago. We were all in the state of lethargy; the vitality of our religion was dead. We had lived in decided opposition to the *Review* and its supporters, and cherished a hard spirit; but for one I have prayed and pray still that the Lord will forgive, and hope the dear brethren will also forgive and overlook.¹³⁵

This statement may also be the real reason why the sixteen-page booklet never came into being. Mellberg may have lost his interest in Sabbath-keeping Adventism in favor of the Age-to-Come interpretation of the millennium as early as 1854 or the very year Olsen and Loe resumed their discussion of the Sabbath—probably without Mellberg because of his interest in the Age-to-Come theory. James White's serious illness from overwork in 1853 may also have been a contributing factor to the fact he never wrote the sixteen-page booklet requested by Gustaf Mellberg. The fact that White also knew of Mellberg's alliance with the Age-to-Come may have convinced White that Mellberg was not the right man to represent the Sabbath truth. White was so ill at this time that he had the deed of his house put in his wife's name, because he thought it likely that he would die.¹³⁶ Mellberg himself was sick for a while around

¹³⁵Gustaf Mellberg, *RH*, March 31, 1859, 150.

¹³⁶Bjarne Christiansen, "J. M. Stephenson: Theologian of the 1850s" (unpublished manuscript, CAR, 1973), 4, 10.

this time, therefore neither he nor White were able to follow up their agreement concerning the Sabbath booklet, understandably.¹³⁷

By 1858 the Messenger Party had lost most of its support among Sabbatarian Adventists. James White exulted that “Not one of the eighteen messengers of which they once boasted as being with them is now bearing a public testimony, and not one place of regular meeting of our knowledge among them.”¹³⁸ In 1890, however, the Age-to-Come group still had a church of thirty-six members meeting in a rented hall in Jefferson County. At that time the Oakland Seventh-day Adventist Church had a membership of thirty-eight.¹³⁹

Tragedy in Oakland, Wisconsin

The little settlement of Norwegians in Oakland, Wisconsin, was well-nigh overcome by discouragement with the tragic death of Ole Serns in 1857. The story has it that he was working in the woods near LaCrosse, Wisconsin, when a tree fell on him on June 14, 1857.¹⁴⁰ He was only fifty years of age and had left Norway only seven years earlier. He was buried in the cemetery of the Scandinavian Methodist Church in Cambridge, Wisconsin, because he was still a member of that church and because the Oakland Seventh-day Adventist Church had not yet been organized. The location of his grave is uncertain, apparently because the wooden cross which marked

¹³⁷Mellberg, “Communications,” *RH*, February 20, 1855, 183.

¹³⁸*RH*, January 14, 1858, 77.

¹³⁹ John H. Ott, ed., *Jefferson County Wisconsin and Its People* (Chicago, IL: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1917), 95.

¹⁴⁰Serns and Serns, 19.

his grave was not replaced by a new one often enough.¹⁴¹ His wife Inger Serns and his daughter Caroline are buried in the churchyard of the Oakland Seventh-day Adventist Church. Under a small shrub beside the grave of Inger and her daughter there is a small slab of rock without any inscription. Some think it is Ole Serns' memorial stone.¹⁴²

Baptism by Immersion Introduced

In the early part of 1858 another remarkable development took place at Oakland, Wisconsin.¹⁴³ A Sabbath-keeping Adventist minister by the name of Elisha S. Sheffield visited the vicinity of Oakland and spoke on the subject of baptism by immersion.¹⁴⁴ Elder Sheffield showed from the Bible that the believer's baptism was to be by immersion, and that there was no biblical evidence for the sprinkling of an infant as being the mode of baptism.¹⁴⁵ Concerning this Andrew Olsen himself said that "some of the younger members of our company, who could understand English[,] attended" these meetings where it was clearly proved that "immersion of believers, and not sprinkling of infants, was Scriptural baptism."¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹Ibid.

¹⁴²Rygnestad, "Dei reiste for truå" (They left because of their faith). This information is also based on personal conversations with relatives of Andrew Olsen who are still living at Oakland, Wisconsin.

¹⁴³M. E. Olsen, 347.

¹⁴⁴Halswick, 6; see also Gustaf Mellberg, "Communications," *RH*, February 20, 1855, 183.

¹⁴⁵Andrew Olsen, "En kortfattat Skitse af Br. Andrew Olsens Live" (Brief sketch of the life of Brother Andrew Olsen), *Evangeliets Sende-bud (The Gospel Messenger)*, September 23, 1908, 587.

Much discussion arose as to the mode and the message of baptism. But “little by little” one mode of baptism gained the day, since the Scriptures authorized only baptism by immersion. Said Olsen: “With a few exceptions, all the Sabbath-keepers accepted it” in spite of the fact that some of the Methodists tried in vain to convince them that sprinkling was Bible baptism. It was hardest for the older people to accept this new understanding of baptism, because they had “been so thoroughly indoctrinated in the teaching of the Lutherans” who viewed infant baptism as “christening” which guaranteed eternal life.¹⁴⁷

Lutheranism upholds the traditional practice of infant baptism as a sacrament of salvation in which God's grace reaches out to the newborn child. For Lutherans, baptism signifies God's unconditional love, which is independent of the age of the candidate or any intellectual, moral, or emotional achievements on the part of the individual being baptized. This baptism is also performed without the child's choice or consent. Andrew Olsen had already in Norway rejected this understanding of the Lutherans, when he and his wife refused to have their youngest daughter Asborg (born August 20, 1849) baptized, less than a year before they left Norway for America. Andrew's refusal to have his daughter baptized “caused them more or less to be driven out” of their community by the Lutheran minister, church members, and neighbors. This may have led to his final determination to immigrate to America.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

¹⁴⁸Rygnestad, “Dei reiste for truå” (They left because of their faith). See also *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists* (Basle: Imprimerie Polyglotte, 1886), 57, 58.

The intellectual and spiritual acceptance, early in 1858, of the biblical doctrine of baptism by immersion opened the door for the message of Sabbath-keeping Adventists in Oakland. In April of that year¹⁴⁹ Elder Waterman Phelps, a Sabbath-keeping Adventist, was the “first one to preach the third angel’s message in our community,”¹⁵⁰ said Andrew Olsen. Elder Phelps was a powerful preacher and conducted his public evangelism in Hebron, Wisconsin, near Oakland. The Norwegian Sabbath-keeping Methodists attended these meetings and in spite of language difficulties they understood the whispered translations of the younger generation and accepted the threefold message of Rev 14.¹⁵¹

According to Seventh-day Adventists, the threefold message of Rev 14 includes (1) the hour of God’s judgment has come as the culmination of “the everlasting gospel,” an appeal to all mankind to recognize God as the only true Creator of life and law; (2) the fall of Babylon, and (3) the mark of the beast. The third angel’s message according to Adventist understanding is the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath as the end-time sign of allegiance to God, the opposite of the mark of the beast, which will be signified by Sunday-keeping when Sunday-keeping shall be enforced by civil laws. These distinctive doctrines became the foundational truths of the Seventh-day Adventists, together with their belief that the gift of prophecy was revealed in the work of Ellen G. White.

¹⁴⁹M. E. Olsen, 347.

¹⁵⁰McReynolds, 16, 17.

¹⁵¹Ibid.

Sheffield's introduction of the doctrine of baptism by immersion, and the preaching of the third angel's message by Phelps led most of the Norwegian Sabbath-keeping Methodists to accept the message of the Sabbath-keeping Adventists and join their movement through baptism in May 1858. Andrew Olsen recalled that "it was my privilege, and also that of my wife, to be buried with our Lord in the sacred rite. It was a blessed occasion." Andrew and Bertha Olsen's firstborn son, Ole Anders Olsen, age 13, "followed the example" of his parents and was baptized "in the last week of that same year." Øivind Gjertsen confirms that Andrew Olsen and his wife Bertha were "the first Norwegians who were converted to the Seventh-day Adventist movement in America."¹⁵²

Said Andrew Olsen:

The truth as it is brought to us in the threefold message of Revelation 14 has continued to be most precious to myself and my family. I have had the joy of seeing all our children converted to the Lord, and all firm believers in the present truth. All our sons are engaged in the work. Four have been called to the ministry (one now deceased [1908]), and the fifth is also in the work [of the Adventist Church].¹⁵³

The "few exceptions" of Norwegian Methodist Sabbath-keepers who did not accept baptism by immersion at this time were Sern Loe and his wife and another couple whose names are unknown.¹⁵⁴ Francis C. Johnson said: "Baptism was presented to them, and all received it except two families who rejected it, and who

¹⁵²McReynolds, 17; M. E. Olson, 347; Øivind Gjertsen, Sigmund Skard, et al., eds., 77.

¹⁵³Quoted in McReynolds, 17.

¹⁵⁴Ibid.; Onsager, 13.

have now gone back to Babylon.”¹⁵⁵ This was confirmed by O. A. Olsen, the son of Andrew Olsen, who reported that “after we became Seventh-day Adventists, my uncle [Sern Loe] who had come with us to the very first advent meetings left our group” and united with the Methodist Episcopal Church.¹⁵⁶ Martin M. Olsen, another son of Andrew Olsen, says that his uncle Sern Loe was a Methodist, as does his gravestone in the churchyard of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Cambridge, Wisconsin.¹⁵⁷

Andrew Olsen said that this “incident,” that is, the preaching of baptism in the early part of 1858, “opened the way” for the community to hear “the present truth.”¹⁵⁸

Waterman Phelps reported to the *Review* in 1858:

Two weeks ago last Sabbath I attended a meeting at Koshkonong, where quite a number of our Norwegian friends were out. After the meeting closed we assembled on the lake shore where six of them put on Christ by baptism. Last Sabbath I was with them again, and after the meeting five more were baptized. Three had been previously baptized, making in all fourteen, and still the interest continues.¹⁵⁹

Andrew Olsen added that, “as far as I know, our acceptance of the Sabbath, and the third angel’s message, was the beginning of this work among the

¹⁵⁵Francis C. Johnson, Letter to the Editor, *RH*, March 17, 1859, 134.

¹⁵⁶Louis Halswick, “Called to Be a Minister,” *YI*, March 28, 1944, 3.

¹⁵⁷M. M. Olsen, 12.

¹⁵⁸McReynolds, 16. At this time “the present truth” for Sabbath-keeping Adventists included the biblical teachings about Christ’s priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary on the day of the heavenly atonement, the Sabbath, the second coming of Jesus Christ, and the human condition in death.

¹⁵⁹Waterman Phelps, “Norwegians in Wisconsin,” *RH*, June 3, 1858, 20.

Scandinavian people. Those who accepted the truth at Oakland, Wis. [*sic*] were all Norwegians, and only the young people at that time could understand English.”¹⁶⁰

Phelps characterized the Norwegians as “intelligent, honest people,” among whom “light has sprung up.” They are “anxious for the whole truth, which has its designed effect upon their hearts.”¹⁶¹ Halswick says that “further baptisms followed at fairly frequent intervals, and in the last week of the year a number of young people, among them O. A. Olsen, the eldest son of Andrew Olsen, followed the example of their parents and were numbered with the company of believers.”¹⁶² By March 1859 there were twenty Sabbath-keeping Adventists in Oakland.¹⁶³

Before Waterman Phelps left Wisconsin he gave the following testimony to the believers: “I wish to say to the Norwegian brethren, that I am thankful and indebted to them for what they have done for me, since I started to preach among them, and I’ll add for their benefit, that in benevolence, meekness and righteousness, they rank above most people I have known and lived among. God bless them.”¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰McReynolds, 16.

¹⁶¹Phelps, “Norwegians in Wisconsin,” 20.

¹⁶²Halswick, 7.

¹⁶³Francis C. Johnson, Letter to the Editor, *RH*, March 17, 1859, 134.

¹⁶⁴Halswick, 7.

Organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Oakland, Wisconsin

Andrew Olsen said that from the time the Norwegians in Oakland, Wisconsin, accepted the message brought by the Sabbath-keeping Adventists “the truth steadily advanced.”¹⁶⁵

On Sept. 13-15, 1861, a conference of members from Illinois and southern Wisconsin (with delegates from northern Wisconsin also) convened at Avon, Wisconsin, with J. N. Loughborough as chairman and W. S. Ingraham as secretary. At this meeting, the largest yet held in Wisconsin, it was voted to approve the suggestion for church and conference organization made at Battle Creek in 1861.¹⁶⁶

The [Wisconsin] conference convened again Sept. 27-28, 1862, at Avon, Wisconsin, with Ingraham as chairman and Joseph G. Wood, secretary. The following Wisconsin churches were listed as represented by delegates: Hundred Mile Grove, Marquette, Mackford, Rubicon, Oakland, Little Prairie, Franklin, and Avon.¹⁶⁷

Between these two conference meetings, in December 1861, Andrew Olsen and Tarel F. Johnson, together with ministers William S. Ingraham and Isaac Sanborn, led in organizing the first Norwegian Seventh-day Adventist Church in the world. Waterman Phelps was present, but did not participate in the founding of the church, since he did not believe in church organization. Phelps’ interest in the Age-to-Come understanding may also have been a reason for his negative attitude towards organization. William S. Ingraham reported in the *Review* to James White, April 15, 1862, from Monroe, Wisconsin, that “I have just returned from Oakland. We had a good meeting there. Three more joined to the church. Probably Bro. Phelps is beyond

¹⁶⁵Ibid.

¹⁶⁶*SDAE*, s.v. “Wisconsin Conference.”

¹⁶⁷Ibid.

the reach of the truth. He is going into the future age delusion.” “Not long after” the organization of the Oakland Church, Phelps “ceased to labor in the ministry” of the Sabbath-keeping Adventists.¹⁶⁸

The following resolution was agreed upon by the members present: “We the undersigned hereby associate ourselves together as a church taking the name Seventh-day Adventist, covenanting to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.”¹⁶⁹ “S. [Samuel] A. Bragg was the first elder” of the church, later followed by Andrew Olsen. This organizational meeting was held in the red district schoolhouse, according to the “Serns Family Saga.”¹⁷⁰ Andrew Olsen commented later:

In 1861 the subject of organization was agitated, and in the latter part of that year the church of Seventh-day Adventists was organized with Brother S. A. Bragg as elder. A little later, the brethren called me to this responsible position, and for some twenty years I served the church in the capacity of elder until my age prevented my doing justice to that important position.¹⁷¹

C. W. Flaiz, in his obituary about Elder O. A. Johnson, says that the organization took place in the spring of 1860, but this is evidently an error.¹⁷² The *Jefferson County Union* maintains in an article titled “The First Church of Its Kind in the World” that the organization took place in Andrew Olsen’s home in 1861.¹⁷³ When the Oakland Seventh-day Adventist Church was enlarged in 1966, a

¹⁶⁸M. E. Olsen, 347, 348; Halswick, 5, 7.

¹⁶⁹Halswick, 7.

¹⁷⁰Serns and Serns, 33.

¹⁷¹McReynolds, 17.

¹⁷²C. W. Flaiz, “Elder O. A. Johnson [Obituary],” *RH*, March 22, 1922, 22.

¹⁷³*Jefferson County [Wisconsin] Union*, 1970-1910, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Microfilm copy.

cornerstone in the northern wall was installed with the inscription, “1861 AD 1966.”¹⁷⁴ Whether the inscription on the cornerstone refers to the time of the organization of the church or to the building of the church is not certain. Chilson thinks that the building was erected in 1864,¹⁷⁵ whereas the “Serns’ Family Saga” states that it was in 1861 “on a plot of ground given by Andrew Olsen.”¹⁷⁶ M. E. Olsen thinks “it was decided in 1864 to build a church on a plot of ground centrally located, donated by Andrew Olsen.”¹⁷⁷

“Most of the members in Wisconsin were happy for church organization, but some thought it was leading the church into Babylon, among them Waterman Phelps, the first convert and an indefatigable worker. Unreconciled to organization, he withdrew from the church.”¹⁷⁸

Chilson also said that when the members of the Oakland Seventh-day Adventist Church talked about building a larger sanctuary, nearly a century after they built the first one, they recalled the following oral traditional saying of the pioneers: “On one occasion when Sister White spoke here, . . . she said this church would still be standing when the Lord returns.” The Seventh-day Adventist church building at Oakland, Wisconsin, is the oldest Norwegian Adventist church still standing.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴See picture of the cornerstone in appendix B.

¹⁷⁵Chilson, *Trial and Triumph*, 63.

¹⁷⁶Serns and Serns, 33.

¹⁷⁷M. E. Olsen, 348.

¹⁷⁸*SDAE*, s.v. “Wisconsin Conference.”

¹⁷⁹Chilson, *Trial and Triumph*, 63.

According to Lawrence Onsager the following names are the charter members of the Oakland Seventh-day Adventist Church organized in December 1861, known or presumed:

Mr. and Mrs. Samuel A. Bragg
Andrew and Bertha Olsen
Ole Anders Olsen
Halvor and Orra Olsen
Susanne Olsen
Tarel and Todne Johnson
Ole¹⁸⁰ and Inger Serns
Andrew Serns
Christian and Inger (Serns) Thompson¹⁸¹

“Other possible members” listed by Onsager included Sarah Olsen, thirteen, the daughter of Andrew Olsen; five other Serns children who were old enough to be members; and Tarel F. Johnson’s children by his first wife.”¹⁸² The above-mentioned charter members number fourteen. According to Francis C. Johnson, son of Tarel F. Johnson, there were twenty Sabbath-keeping Adventists by March 1859 in Oakland.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰Ole Serns could not have been a charter member since he died June 14, 1857. See Serns and Serns, 21.

¹⁸¹Onsager pointed out that the original records of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are no longer in existence. He therefore used the tombstones in the Oakland SDA Church Cemetery and obituaries in *Jefferson County Union* newspaper and the *Review and Herald* where some of the names are spoken of as charter members. See Onsager, 34, 35.

¹⁸²Onsager, 35.

¹⁸³Francis C. Johnson, Letter to the Editor, *RH*, March 17, 1859, 134.

The Need for a Scandinavian Minister

Since only the young could understand English, the desire to have a Scandinavian-speaking minister arose. Andrew Olsen puts it thus: “We were very anxious for someone to teach us in our own tongue, and for this we prayed earnestly that God would raise up a man to preach the truth in the Scandinavian tongue, so that our own nationality both in America and Europe might hear the message.” This supplication was “answered in the person of Elder John G. Matteson who some years later accepted the truth, and became the pioneer labourer in the Scandinavian tongue.”¹⁸⁴ At the time of his arrival in Oakland, Wisconsin, Matteson was only twenty-nine years of age. His life and work will be presented in the next chapter.

Summary

By the mid-eighteen hundreds, the State of Wisconsin in the United States of America had become a very attractive place for the Norwegian immigrants, promising the newcomers a fertile and timber-rich land, no taxation or tithes, education for all, and social equality. It was therefore relatively easy to endure a cold first winter in a log cabin or a dugout. So well known was the Koshkonong area in Jefferson County, Wisconsin, that it was called Koskeland in Norway.

Forest and field yielded good returns during the first year. So did the field of faith as well. After the arrival of the Danish Methodist minister Willerup late in 1850 to the Methodist church in Cambridge, Wisconsin, five miles from the Olsen’s home, some Norwegian Methodists began conducting a series of evangelical meetings there which were attended among others by the families of Andrew Olsen and Ole Serns.

According to Andrew Olsen it was here and now that “our Christian experience” began.

Accounts are contradictory as to who and when began Sabbath-keeping among the Norwegians in Oakland and Sumner; however, the major principal sources on the subject are in general agreement. Two sources besides Gustaf Mellberg himself, credit Mellberg for igniting the interest for the Sabbath anew, with Tarel F. Johnson and Ole Hegland Serns stating that they either began keeping the Sabbath at the end of 1854 or in the autumn of 1855. Five sources besides Olsen himself maintain that Olsen and Loe commenced studying the Sabbath question together in the autumn of 1854 and began keeping the Sabbath in the spring of 1855 and that others followed their example in the autumn of the same year. These sources do not mention Mellberg’s role.

The time reference mentioned by Olsen in connection with his relatives and friends’ renewed interest in the study of Scriptures and the question of the observance of seventh-day Sabbath must be the autumn of 1854, because it did not burst into full blossom until after the arrival in 1854 of Olsen’s brother-in-law, Sern Loe, his next-door neighbor to the south. It seems most certain that these two families in particular studied the Sabbath question together without any outside help throughout the following winter and were therefore also the very first two families to keep the Sabbath about Easter time in 1855. The majority of the sources quoted above agree in principal with this conclusion, although some of the information given in the sources varies. A major contribution to their renewed interest in the Sabbath question was the

¹⁸⁴McReynolds, 17.

fact that Sunday was referred to in church as being the Sabbath of the Lord. Such a reference to Sunday was totally unheard of among the Scandinavian Lutherans, although familiar to the English-speaking Protestants. This reminded the Norwegians from Finsland and Vågsbygd of their experience regarding the Sabbath while attending church in Norway, and led to a revival of the issue.

There is, however, one source that has an altogether different view of what took place concerning the study of the seventh-day Sabbath during the latter half of 1854 and the following year. This source is totally ignored by Olsen and the majority of the other sources quoted above without giving any reason as to why it is so. This source is Gustaf Mellberg who claimed to have been instrumental in leading the Norwegians to keep the seventh-day Sabbath after he had met James White in June 1854 when the latter was fighting the Age-to-Come doctrine of Stephenson and Hall in Wisconsin. According to Matteson, their influence was felt within some of the Norwegian families, since it is reported that they visited one such home at least. It may have been the home of Tarel F. Johnson in particular, since some of the members of that family became affected by the Age-to-Come doctrine as did Mellberg himself. It is impossible either to confirm Mellberg's claim or to refute it altogether although his writings are closer in time to the actual event than the other sources quoted. Some other sources, however, are also eye-witness accounts.

The silence of Olsen and others regarding Mellberg's claim seems rather strange, but it is there for whatever reason. However, the reason may be as simple as the fact that Olsen and Loe had no contact with Mellberg at all, and that Sabbath discussions were taking place at different places at more or less the same time and

yielding in the end the same result. The main point is that the “good work continued until eight large families were united in the observance of the Lord’s Sabbath.” Then “little by little the truth” about baptism by immersion “gained the day” in 1858. With few exceptions, like that of Sern Loe, all the Sabbath-keepers, about twenty in number by 1857, accepted this form of baptism, which according to Olsen “opened the way for the present truth to be preached in the community.” When the Sabbatarian Adventist Waterman Phelps presented the third angel’s message in 1858, the door of the Sabbath-keeping Norwegian Methodists stood already wide open to let in Sabbath-keeping Adventism. A Sabbatarian Adventist Church in Oakland, Wisconsin, was organized in 1861 with Samuel A. Bragg as elder. Around this time a church building was erected which still stands. The little beginning in Norway was now firmly rooted in Oakland, Wisconsin, ready to “grow into a mighty work,” to use Andrew Olsen’s words, both among Norwegians in America and later on in Norway itself. “We had the Bible,” said Olsen, “that was all, and that was enough.”¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

JOHN G. MATTESON

John G. Matteson (1835-1896) played a central role in the development and history of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Norway. Adventist historian Adriel Chilson commented: “Few men have touched the lives of so many with the saving gospel of Jesus and the [Adventist] message as did Elder John G. Matteson. Though always poor in this world’s goods, he was abundantly rich in Bible knowledge, and personal experience with Jesus Christ. He was known in the religious community as “the Apostle Paul of the Adventists.” Through his labors thousands united with the church.”¹

The two main sources of information concerning Matteson’s life are his own autobiographical account, published after his death, and the book *Gospel Viking*, by Adriel D. Chilson, based on Matteson’s autobiography, Matteson’s diaries and correspondence, and on more than five hundred reports and articles in the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*.²

¹Adriel D. Chilson, *Trial and Triumph on a Western Frontier* (Elko, NV: Heritage Publications, 1976), 25. For a chronological summary of Matteson’s life, see Appendix C.

²John G. Matteson, *Mattesons liv og adventbevægelsens begyndelse blandt skandinaverne: en selvbiografi* (The life of Matteson and the beginning of the Adventist movement among the Scandinavians: An autobiography) (College View, NE: International Publishing, 1908) (Facsimile reprint, Nærum, Denmark: Dansk Bogforlag, 1972). Abbreviated as *ML*. Matteson wrote the autobiography in English

The First Twenty Years of Matteson's Life

John Gottlieb Matteson was born to Danish parents in the village of Tranekær on the Danish Langeland Island, probably April 24, 1835, in a house which belonged to the Count who also owned most of the island. About eight days after his birth, Matteson was baptized a member of the Lutheran State Church of Denmark. His parents were Hans Christopher Mathiasen and Karen Sophie Johansen. Matteson's birth name was spelled John Gottlieb Mathisen in the Church Registry. Matteson had three sisters: Annette and Julia who went with the family to the United States, and a much older sister, name unknown, who, in 1890, was still living in the house in which Matteson was born. Matteson's father was a tailor by trade. Matteson was precocious and began attending school at the age of four, three years younger than the usual age for beginning school.³ At age twelve he learned to play the violin. After six months of instruction he joined the village band and played with them for three years.

and it was later translated into Danish for publication. There are some slight differences between the English manuscript and the Danish book, but, fortunately, none that matter. The original English title is: *The Providence of God in Events Connected with the Life of John G. Matteson* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Company, 1890). A copy is found in the Center for Adventist Research, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI. Adriel D. Chilson, *Gospel Viking* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1981).

³The date April 24, 1835, is based on Matteson's own statement that he was baptized about 8 days after his birth which was May 1, 1835, according to the Church Registry quoted by Poul Marlo in *Vendsyssel Årbog* (Vendsyssel Yearbook). Poul Marlo, "Adventisterne og prædikanten i Alstrup" (The Adventists and the preacher in Alstrup) *Vendsyssel Årbog* (Vendsyssel Yearbook), 1978, 53. In the Church Registry for Tranekær, Matteson's name appears as John Gottlieb Mathisen and not exactly as his father's surname: Mathiasen. See also Matteson, *Providence*, 1, 3, 4, 7, 68, 78.

During that time the band was known for performing in theatrical plays and in distinguished ballrooms in the village and out in the country.⁴

After completing primary school by 1848 at the age of thirteen Matteson moved with his family to Rundkøping, a town of 2,500 inhabitants which was about 10 percent of the total population of the island at that time.⁵ The same year Matteson completed primary school, his parents placed him in high school for two years.⁶ The availability of such education implies that his parents may have been fairly well off. Matteson said that he was “very studious” and his “father’s greatest desire” was that he should become a priest.⁷

In addition to his “general subjects,” Matteson studied German and English. He was very good at German and often translated booklets for his father’s trade, but he especially enjoyed using English.⁸ In 1849 at the age of fourteen, Matteson joined the catechism class of the local Lutheran Church. The class continued through the winter until Easter when he was confirmed and allowed “to partake of the sacrament [of the Eucharist] for the first time.”⁹

After Matteson’s confirmation he worked in a general store for “about two years and a half,” when he had to leave the store because he was “suffering from

⁴*ML*, 22.

⁵Matteson, *Providence*, 47.

⁶*Ibid.*, 47; *ML*, 21.

⁷Matteson, *Providence*, 18, 47.

⁸*ML*, 21.

⁹*ML*, 21; Matteson, *Providence*, 49, 50, 51, 55.

scrofulous disorders.” Consequently he went home, “intending to learn my father’s trade of tailoring.” Matteson stayed at home “a little over a year” during which time he “learned enough” tailoring to “make my own clothes, at least,”¹⁰ before landing a job at the village post office as postal clerk at age eighteen.¹¹ The postmaster was a former army captain whom Matteson considered heavy-handed. There was a young man about Matteson’s age who worked with him in the office. After he had opened several letters illicitly, the postmaster reported him to the police who put him in jail, where he hanged himself. The court blamed the suicide on the harsh postmaster.¹²

After Matteson began working for a postmaster who spoke fluent English, Matteson’s English improved considerably. The postmaster told Matteson many things about North America.¹³ While working in the store and at the post office Matteson enjoyed observing the people who came and went throughout the day. He enjoyed studying their personalities and character. During Matteson’s last year as postal clerk, the postmaster decided to immigrate to the United States. Because of that, the postmaster collected a lot of magazines and books about the different places in the United States. He wrote many pages about his plans and ideas and from time to time shared his thoughts with young Matteson. Thus Matteson learned about America and he also became very interested in immigrating to this promising land.¹⁴

¹⁰*ML*, 55, 61, 62.

¹¹*GV*, 10.

¹²*ML*, 12.

¹³*ML*, 24.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

Matteson recalled that during his adolescent years he sometimes reflected upon his future, in this world and the next. He considered his acquaintances seductive and pernicious. He asked himself, “Why not choose to be different?” and answered his own question, that when all those around one are bad it is not easy to be different. For Matteson there was but one thing to do, and that was to leave his homeland to find better circles of associates in another country. He noted his belief in life after death, and that there was a Creator behind the wonders of nature. He was also sure that the life he led with his friends could not possibly be the same in afterlife. What seemed so tasteful in the present could not possibly characterize eternal life, Matteson concluded.¹⁵ However, as time went by “he lost all interest in religion, and prided himself as a freethinker, as the members of the young atheistic culture called themselves.”¹⁶ Years later, Matteson became certain that just as God’s providence had guided Abraham to a foreign land, so God had also done for him.¹⁷

Onward to a Better Life in the New World

In 1855, when Matteson was twenty years of age, he left Denmark with his parents and two sisters, together with other Danes in a group totaling eighteen persons. He thought this move was especially good for his father who had gradually become an alcoholic and was wasting his savings on drink. His father wholeheartedly

¹⁵*ML*, 24, 25.

¹⁶*GV*, 10.

¹⁷*ML*, 25.

agreed to emigrate from Denmark. He sold the house in the village and gave up his trade, planning to buy land in the U.S. and work there as a farmer.¹⁸

When the house and everything they did not want to carry with them had been sold, they traveled to Hamburg, Germany, and from there set sail on a clipper for America.¹⁹ Matteson's knowledge of German enabled him to prepare the paperwork for all eighteen people in the group.²⁰

The voyage from Hamburg to New York lasted forty-two days. Matteson's group shared a second-class cabin with sixteen other people. "The captain decided to take a northerly route in hopes of more favorable winds." On "the third day out of port"²¹ when they had just sailed north of Scotland²² "the captain startled those on board the ship" by saying that "water is coming into the hold."²³ There were several small leaks in one of the seams which called for "a twenty-four-hour pumping schedule [which] included every able-bodied man for the remainder"²⁴ of the voyage. Some thought that the ship would sink to the bottom of the sea. As they approached

¹⁸*GV*, 9; *ML*, 26-29.

¹⁹Marlo, 54.

²⁰*ML*, 27.

²¹*GV*, 11.

²²*ML*, 30.

²³*GV*, 11.

²⁴*Ibid.*

North America, by way of Newfoundland, they made a risky journey through drifting ice and dense fog.²⁵

After reaching New York, the family continued their journey by train to Chicago. From there they took a steamship to Milwaukee where they experienced their first Fourth of July celebration. Then the voyage continued to the Lutheran Manitowoc, Wisconsin, and onward twenty-two miles by oxcart²⁶ to the town of New Denmark, in Brown County, where lived a man they had corresponded with.²⁷ In Brown County, eighteen miles from the village of Green Bay, Matteson's father bought eighty acres of wooded land for \$1.20 per acre and built a log cabin.²⁸ He had to pay the price of \$50.00 in gold for a common cow, and \$9.00 for a barrel of rye. One day's wage was \$1.25 at the time.²⁹

Matteson said: "When we got to our journey's end, we moved into a shanty covered with boards, containing but one room, and no furniture." It was offered to Matteson by a neighbor. "The floor was our bedstead and the roof leaked freely whenever it rained." This was the beginning of their frontier life. Later Matteson built a log house. "There was no saw in the vicinity," said Matteson, "but we got two men to saw the boards sufficient for floor and ceiling. Then we made a bee and the

²⁵*ML*, 31.

²⁶*GV*, 13.

²⁷*ML*, 25, 27.

²⁸*ML*, 33; *GV*, 13.

²⁹*ML*, 34, 46; Matteson, *Providence*, 76.

house went up.” The parlor, the sitting room, the dining room, the bedroom, and the kitchen were all in one room.

Matteson continued: “Afterwards we made shingles for the roof, split logs for gables, bedstead, and tables. We sawed off a few ends of a big log for stools and by and by we got so far that father made a stool with four legs and I made one with three. When we finally moved into the house we were very thankful that we had a home.”³⁰

Matteson’s Initial Years in the New World

The first years found Matteson working hard clearing land, in the lumber woods, making and selling shingles, making roads, at work in the pinery, cutting grass in the marshes, in the harvest fields, in the saw mill, and digging through a hill to make a new street, besides duties on his father’s farm, which brought comparatively little the first three years.³¹

Some time after Matteson arrived in the United States he identified himself with the following portrayal of a Norwegian immigrant mentioned in the book, *The Hauge Movement in America*:

We came here to Norway Grove, got our homestead, put up some poor little huts, and began to clear the land. We were poor and ungodly, every one of us. But we thought we had to have both a church and a preacher just the same. We were used to them from Norway. When the winter came with snow on the ground we went up in the woods up north where there was government land. There we stole the timber, cursed and swore, and hauled the timber home. I believe I was the worst of them all. We sawed

³⁰Matteson, *Providence*, 75, 77, 80.

³¹*Ibid.*, 78-85, 87.

up the timber and, when the summer came, we built a church and called a preacher. When he came, he called us ‘good Christians.’³²

Of his life in the autumn of 1859, Matteson later wrote, “By this time I had become an infidel.” He still believed in an almighty Creator and life beyond the present, but he had abandoned any belief in a historical Christ. He did not even believe that the person Christ had ever existed, and tried to persuade others to believe the same. He enjoyed arguing with the pastor, especially when he was able to corner him. He himself said that he “did not know any better at this time.”³³

At Ripon Prairie, Matteson encountered the paranormal phenomenon of spiritualism when he met an old Scotchman by the name of Clyde. He was a bachelor and “had been a lawyer in the old country but now he earned his living by hard work.” He told Matteson that “certain spirits came into his shanty” by night rapping. Spiritualism did not impress Matteson at all. Almost by the next day his curiosity for it was gone.³⁴

Matteson’s first years in Wisconsin introduced him to coworkers of various nationalities. He soon noticed how his and his associates’ consumption of alcoholic beverages posed a serious threat to the integrity of their behavior. Still remembering the effects it had upon his own father back in Denmark, he was alarmed at how it affected their health and morals. Chilson writes: “Meanwhile, something was happening to John that he could not understand. The swearing, the coarse

³²*The Hauge Movement in America* (n.p., n.d.), 378; quoted in Lewis Harrison Christian, *Sons of the North and Their Share in the Advent Movement* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1942), 108, 109.

³³*ML*, 42.

³⁴*ML*, 42, 43; *GV*, 14, 15.

conversation, and particularly the drunkenness seemed revolting to him. Deciding upon a temperance movement, he composed a pledge of abstinence from alcohol. His campaign against liquor went without public oratory or newspaper coverage. There was but one pledge signer—himself. But his decision was final.”³⁵

Matteson’s Conversion

Matteson later observed that

true conversion brings about a great change in a person. He becomes deeply interested in heavenly things although he formerly cared nothing for them. Conversion is sometimes wrought very suddenly and sometimes more slowly. In most cases certain influences are brought to bear on a person some time before his conversion and steps are taken which lead in this direction.³⁶

The pastors Matteson had met thus far failed to impress him as being good representatives of the Christian faith. He did not think his local pastor in Denmark had been a good representative of forgiveness of sins, nor did he believe him worthy to distribute forgiveness through the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.³⁷

At a mill where Matteson worked he met some Germans who, from time to time, gathered in a schoolhouse for worship. Their pastor was a Methodist who preached in German. This pastor would not have impressed Matteson either, except for one thing: He used no manuscript and referred to all scriptural passages from memory. Matteson was also surprised that the pastor could remember the content of the verses without looking them up in the Bible.³⁸

³⁵*GV*, 14; *ML*, 47-50.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷*GV*, 9.

“In the autumn of 1858,” a neighbor invited Matteson “to attend a prayer meeting.” Unfamiliar with the term “prayer meeting,” Matteson assumed that this was just an ordinary social gathering and looked forward to joining the party. One of the guests was a conservative Lutheran, who enjoyed defending his faith, but the majority of those present were Presbyterians. Since, according to Matteson, the host could not pray any better than the guests, nothing was said of prayer. The evening consisted of much coffee-drinking and pipe-smoking, while the guests discussed Lutheran doctrine, especially the doctrine of confirmation. The meeting ended with hymn singing.³⁹

Matteson later summed up his distaste for the popular Lutheranism of his time as follows: “Their religion consists principally in outward forms and ceremonies – celebration of christening the child, confirmation, the wedding, and the funeral. These are celebrated with excessive eating and drinking. Through these four ceremonies, people come into the world, and go out of it as Christians. The priest performs the clerical part, and the baker, the cook, and the butler the rest.”⁴⁰

The following winter Matteson borrowed books from the village library. One book, titled *Ironthorpe: The Pioneer Preacher*, impressed Matteson greatly. It was about an infidel merchant who had become a Christian and who in a wonderful way blended preaching God’s Word with good practical work for his neighbors in need.⁴¹

³⁸ML, 45.

³⁹Ibid., 54.

⁴⁰GV, 90, 91.

⁴¹Paul Creyton, *Ironthorpe: The Pioneer Preacher* (Boston, MA: Boston Philips, Sampson & Co., 1855). *Ironthorpe* is a word composed of two parts, *iron* and

This convinced Matteson that it was possible to be a true Christian, something he had not believed in for years. Matteson writes that this “first gleam of true religion” caused him to ask himself, “Why cannot you become a Christian?” He answered that question by starting to study the Bible with great interest. The Sermon on the Mount became his greatest delight and he said that this portion of the Scriptures produced in him the repentance which led him to confess and forsake his sin. He also said that his soul had been influenced by something better than at earlier times. The following passage of the Sermon on the Mount captivated him the most: “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; . . . for if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans do the same?” (Matt 5:44, 46 KJV).⁴²

In the light of these verses of Scripture Matteson saw that so far he had not even loved those who loved him. These words of Scripture stood above everything else he had heard. This was *the* truth and could not have originated as a human teaching. This had to be something Christ brought with him from heaven to earth. To Matteson this had to be the worthiest goal of his entire being. It now troubled him that he had earlier denied the existence of a Redeemer. He was also convinced by the Ten Commandments that without Christ he was a condemned man. Remorse seized him

thorpe. *Iron* is the most common and important of all metals; *Thorpe* is akin to Icelandic *thorp* (*þorp*) and German *dorf*, a small group of dwellings in the country, a hamlet or village, found mainly in place names and personal names. Here it is in a personal name.

⁴²*ML*, 54, 55.

as he remembered that at times he had been unfriendly towards his own parents. It caused him much discomfort.⁴³

Some time later Matteson and some of his neighbors came together in a schoolhouse to study the Bible and sing. A Baptist blacksmith named Ole Jacobsen⁴⁴ attended the meeting. Matteson looked down on him as lesser because of his lack of education. Then the blacksmith suggested that all should pray, but none of the others had ever prayed aloud, so they asked the blacksmith to do so. Matteson had never heard such prayer. The blacksmith's prayer made such an impact on Matteson, that Matteson never forgot this unusual encounter.⁴⁵ "Afterwards, the blacksmith talked with Matteson privately and gave him a copy of the Baptist Creed."⁴⁶

"Monday found John and Thoralf⁴⁷ cutting wood." While Matteson was splitting "a pine block, the ax rebounded and sliced through his boot."⁴⁸ Confined to his chair for the next few days, Matteson used the time to study the New Testament and the Baptist Creed, still vividly remembering the blacksmith's prayer. Early Friday

⁴³Ibid., 56.

⁴⁴GV, 18.

⁴⁵ML, 57.

⁴⁶GV, 17.

⁴⁷Thoralf is identified by Chilson in GV, 33, as Matteson's "old companion in the firewood-cutting business" who became a Christian, married, and moved to Neeneah. Chilson describes him as "a head taller and a huskier build" than Matteson." GV, 16.

⁴⁸GV, 17.

morning, he “limped a little way into the woods and there poured out his soul to the Lord. His was a thorough conversion.”⁴⁹

Matteson planned to make a farewell speech Sunday night at the weekly dance. He asked for attention and said: “Until I heard Ole Jacobsen [the blacksmith] pray last Sunday morning, I thought all religion was farce. Now I know differently, because I got down on my knees before the Lord Jesus and asked Him to forgive my sinful ways. He heard my prayer and cleansed my heart. Now I want my future course to be only as His Spirit shall direct. Would any of you care to discuss the Bible and other religious books next Sunday night?”⁵⁰

The next Sunday several of the young people came to listen to Matteson. After about one and an half hours those who wanted gathered around the table. As they sat there “smoking heavily with boxes of tobacco on the table, they discussed the word of God.”⁵¹

During the next week, Matteson recalled, he had peace within because of his faith in Jesus. It was very precious to him. He knew that God was his Father and that he was his child. All burden of sin and fear of eternal punishment were gone. Matteson said, “I was now ready to pray for and lead other souls to the fountain of salvation.” This experience took place in the spring of 1859.⁵²

⁴⁹*ML*, 58; *GV*, 17, 18.

⁵⁰*GV*, 18.

⁵¹*ML*, 58.

⁵²*Ibid.*; Matteson, *Providence*, 95.

The meetings continued and the number of people attending increased as time went on. In his account Matteson describes a large meeting attended by people from the surrounding area and mentions a certain sister who was very interested in the work of salvation. She had for some time read the Bible and had gone into the woods to pray with her friends.⁵³ This lady was Laurentine Godtfredsen, a recent immigrant from Denmark.⁵⁴ When a friend told her that there were meetings on the other side of the river at a certain house and that young Matteson was attending them, it made her very happy. She could hardly believe it, though, because she had known Matteson for his unbelief and as an enemy of Christianity. Godtfredsen and her friend came to the meeting and were amazed at the number of people who attended. She and her friend were glad for the simple testimonies of faith in Jesus Christ they heard. Godtfredsen then spoke about baptism and conversion. She was convinced that believers should live in harmony with God's commands and Jesus Christ's example, and should be buried with him in baptism. Most of the converted ones desired baptism by immersion right away.⁵⁵

Godtfredsen then asked Pastor Larson, who though seventy miles away was the nearest Baptist pastor, to come and baptize them. He arrived after a three-week journey⁵⁶ and baptized ten persons in 1859: Laurentine Godtfredsen; John G.

⁵³*ML*, 59.

⁵⁴L. Johnson, "De første danske Adventister," (the first Danish Adventists) *Evangeliets Sendebud* (the Gospel Messenger) (American edition), February 23, 1910, 125, 126.

⁵⁵*ML*, 59, 60.

⁵⁶*GV*, 20; *ML*, 60.

Matteson; three brothers: Cellius, Anton, and Christian Christiansen and their wives; and Julius Jakobsen and his wife.⁵⁷

Laurentine Godtfredsen and Matteson became very good friends. According to professor P. G. Vig in *Danske i Amerika* (Danes in America), Godtfredsen and Matteson became enthusiastic missionaries for the Baptist Church in America. Vig comments that Godtfredsen was a great Christian in attending to the sick, the needy, and the destitute, adding that she was “a very sympathetic, quiet and compassionate person.”⁵⁸ Later she became a Seventh-day Adventist. It was Godtfredsen, a mother of eleven children and a “mother in Israel,” who more than anyone else encouraged Matteson to serve the Lord as a pastor.⁵⁹

A small church was established in New Denmark due to Godtfredsen’s and Matteson’s preaching and testimony, “but it took no denominational name.”⁶⁰ Since Pastor Larson was living at such a distance the congregation looked more and more to Matteson for leadership. Thus the small flock wrote a letter to Larson and requested him to come and ordain Matteson. On his arrival, however, Larson learned that the parishioners practiced foot washing before participating in the Lord’s Supper. “Much upset,” and determined to correct the problem, Larson spoke on the topic, but to no avail. When he found that both Matteson and the congregation were unmovable he

⁵⁷L. Johnson, “De første danske Adventister,” *Evangeliets Sendebud* (American edition), February 23, 1910, 125, 126.

⁵⁸Quoted in *ibid.*

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰*GV*, 20.

“refused to go any further with the ordination” and left for home.⁶¹ Together with Godtfredsen, Matteson had now formed his first church. Ordained or not, Matteson kept on studying Scriptures. Gradually it became his sole guide in faith and morals.

When Matteson declined to recant his understanding of the foot washing it was simply because of his respect for the Bible as the Word of God. His refusal was based on John 13:14, 15: “If I then, *your* Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.” Matteson viewed this simple instruction by Christ as the Christian's duty to follow.⁶²

By this time Matteson realized more and more that the use of tobacco and strong drinks perverted man's senses and could easily turn him into a vile sinner. He saw that as man's moral power becomes enfeebled, sin appears less and less repulsive. Drunkenness produces increasing unfaithfulness, and a growing distaste for life's practical duties and so did the use of tobacco. This led Matteson to terminate his smoking henceforth.⁶³

Soon Matteson felt his need for higher education, because besides teaching the Word of God he was quite often arguing with members of other churches and criticizing the clergy, in particular, for relying totally on the rites of the church (especially the rite of infant baptism) for salvation, instead of relying on a living and personal faith in Christ himself.

⁶¹Ibid., 20, 21.

⁶²*ML*, 66, 67.

⁶³Ibid., 67, 68, 72; Matteson, *Providence*, 103, 104.

Having thus experienced personally the living faith of the Gospel, Matteson felt that his next work as a believer was to add to his character virtue, and thus cleanse his heart and prepare his mind for further reception of more knowledge of God as revealed in the Bible. This knowledge would then become the foundation of his work. He had, therefore, to leave his parents' home for higher education.

Education and Marriage

In the spring of 1860 Matteson, now twenty-five, left his family's farm and went to Chicago to study at Douglas University, which was owned mostly by the Baptist Church. It later became a part of the University of Chicago. He studied there for two years. In addition to the Baptist professors, some of the professors were Presbyterians and Episcopalians.⁶⁴ During Matteson's second year at the university his strenuous program of both studying and teaching, from 5:00 in the morning to 10 in the evening,⁶⁵ "brought on much sickness" for him, hence by "the following spring, it became evident that he would be unable to complete his course at the university."⁶⁶ However, before leaving the university in 1862 he married Anna Sivertsen from Tromsø, Norway.⁶⁷ In the autumn of the same year their first child arrived and was named Matilda.⁶⁸

⁶⁴*ML*, 73, 75.

⁶⁵Marlo, 55.

⁶⁶*GV*, 26; see also Marlo, 55.

⁶⁷*ML*, 83.

⁶⁸*GV*, 26.

The Sabbath-keeping Adventist Connection

On September 25, 1862, John G. Matteson was ordained as a Baptist pastor by two American Baptist pastors and two Danish Baptist pastors. The oldest of these was pastor Conrad from Berlin, Wisconsin.⁶⁹

Earlier the same year Matteson had accepted a call to the ministry in Bloomfield, Waushara County, Wisconsin. Since Bloomfield Parish could not provide Matteson with a living salary, he secured a teaching certificate in the autumn of the same year. He started teaching in Brushville School where he also held Sunday afternoon services. Soon Waushara Baptist Church requested his service too. So by the end of 1862 he was serving three parishes and teaching as well.⁷⁰

Reflecting upon the year 1862 Matteson said: “Here again a train of circumstances over which I had no control was leading me in a way I knew not. In this place I afterwards became acquainted with different persons who were instrumental in imparting to me knowledge of much precious truth previously unknown to me.”⁷¹

As earlier mentioned, Matteson had accepted the Christian doctrines of baptism by immersion, and the foot washing preceding the Lord’s supper, and had often noticed statements in the New Testament referring to the second coming of Christ. Now one of the members of the Brushville Baptist Church invited Matteson to his home, to show Matteson some literature on (1) the mortality of the soul and (2)

⁶⁹*ML*, 89.

⁷⁰*GV*, 26; *ML*, 82-84.

⁷¹*ML*, 84.

the Bible teaching that death was a sleep until the resurrection at (3) the second coming of Christ.

The content of this literature suggests that its source was Adventist since the three subjects mentioned fall within the category of “present truth” of the SDA Church. This took place at Brushville Baptist Church probably sometime after Matteson was in charge, which is during the second half of 1862. That is in harmony with Matteson’s own statement of November 1863 when he said that he had “been examining the different views held by the Advent people for some over a year” which will be looked at more closely below.⁷²

It took Matteson some time to become thoroughly acquainted with the biblical teaching on the mortality of the soul. What took the longest to grasp was the fate of the ungodly. But, gradually, with undimmed vision he saw how easily the Bible’s teaching on the destiny of the ungodly could be harmonized with “God’s mercy, wisdom and love.”⁷³ Matteson reasoned that it was altogether unthinkable that a loving God would torture his unfortunate children of creation forever and forever. He

⁷²The theology of the Seventh-day Adventist Church largely resembles that of mainstream Protestant Christianity. The SDA Church also has a number of distinctive teachings which differentiate it from other Christian churches which they call “present truth.” Most notably, Adventists believe in the perpetuity of (1) the Ten Commandments, (2) the unconsciousness of man in death, (3) conditional immortality, (4) an atoning ministry of Jesus Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, also called “investigative judgment” that commenced in 1844. Furthermore, a traditionally historicist approach to prophecy has led Adventists to develop a unique system of eschatological beliefs which incorporates (5) a Bible-believing, saved-by-faith-alone, and commandment-keeping “remnant”, (6) a universal end-time crisis revolving around the law of God, and (7) the visible return of Jesus Christ prior to (8) a millennial reign of believers in heaven with Jesus Christ. See *Wikipedia*, s.v., “Seventh-day Adventist theology.”

⁷³*Ibid.*, 91.

became convinced that the soul that keeps on sinning will in the end have totally separated itself from God, and that it shall die an everlasting death, a death from which there will be no hope of a resurrection. By this time his father had passed away, without publicly committing himself to God. Matteson found much comfort in the thought that his father was simply sleeping and would never be subjected to an eternal torture.⁷⁴

After Matteson's ordination into the Baptist ministry, two of the Baptist ministers stayed for the night in his home. When they saw literature on the mortality of the soul and the second coming of Christ in his home they remarked that he would not stay long within the Baptist Church.⁷⁵

As Matteson began to present his new views to the churches he was serving, some members wanted other Baptist pastors to come and explain the matter. The two Americans who were present at his ordination came. After hours of debating it was resolved to do nothing about the situation. Since no public immoral acts had been committed, it was impossible, according to the laws of the Baptist Church, to disfellowship those holding the new doctrine.⁷⁶ Some members wanted those who believed the new doctrine to leave the church, but being in the minority they could not enforce their wishes. Matteson decided to stay at Bloomfield until the end of the year 1862 as he had promised. After that, he and those who agreed with him moved to Brushville, where they organized the Brushville Church as an independent

⁷⁴*ML*, 91, 92.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 90.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 94.

congregation comprised of Norwegians and Danes.⁷⁷ When Matteson established a small church of Americans in Poy Sippi in 1863, he was again serving three churches, besides school teaching.⁷⁸

About this time Matteson attended a conference held by the “Age-to-come-People,” as he called them. They made a very unfavorable impression on him. Matteson mentioned Elder Wilcox and Elder H. B. Reed. It seemed to Matteson that no two persons at the conference seemed to agree on anything. There was no order, much shouting, and the subjects presented were poorly supported by Scripture references. Wilcox showed Matteson a map of old Jerusalem and how it would be rebuilt and how the New Jerusalem would descend from heaven and settle about thirty miles from the old one. That was too much nonsense for Matteson. He told Wilcox that he was thinking of joining a denomination and asked him what their confession of faith was. Wilcox replied, “With us, Brother Matteson, every man goes on his own hook.”⁷⁹ Matteson said no more; he had heard and seen enough of no law, no union, no order, and no biblical theology.⁸⁰

During the spring of 1863,⁸¹ Matteson was arranging a Sunday-morning service in Poy Sippi, Wisconsin, when Chris Jensen,⁸² a neighbor, asked Matteson to

⁷⁷*ML*, 96, 97.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 97.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 96.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 94-96; Matteson, *Providence*, 126, 127.

⁸¹*GV*, 26, 27; *ML*, 98.

⁸²Magne Fuglheim identifies Jensen as Chris Jensen. He was one of the charter members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church at Poy Sippi, Wisconsin. He

come with him to visit Jacob Cady whom Jensen knew well. Jacob Cady and his wife had kept the seventh-day Sabbath since 1857, as did their son Philander Cady and his wife, who lived nearby.⁸³ When Matteson and Jensen arrived at Jacob Cady's home, the Sabbath was coming to an end and Philander Cady was there. He and Jensen began discussing the Sabbath. Matteson was impressed that Philander Cady was so well versed in the Bible. When Philander Cady turned his attention to Matteson, Matteson told him that in the Bible Jews rested on the last day of the week, but Christians rested on the first day of the week to commemorate the resurrection of Christ. However, Matteson could not find any verse in the Bible supporting his claim. Then Philander Cady asked those present: "If Sunday is truly the Lord's Day, why is it that in Isaiah 58:13 God calls what people call the Jewish Sabbath, 'my holy day'?"⁸⁴

At home that night Matteson opened his concordance to find support for keeping Sunday as the Lord's Sabbath, but without any success. He then wrote to Boston to obtain some booklets which were supposed to disprove the obligation to keep the seventh day as the Sabbath. Among the things Matteson got from Boston

may have been one of the original members of the independent 'Baptist' church Matteson established before he became a Seventh-day Adventist. See Fuglheim's *J. G. Matteson's Life and Ministry 1863-1864*, 6, CAR.

⁸³Philander H. Cady was a carpenter who lived at Fountain Valley just south of Poy Sippi, Wisconsin. He later moved to Poy Sippi. Cady and his wife had become Sabbath-keeping Adventists in June or July 1857. See *GV*, 26, 27; *ML*, 98; Carl Cottrell, George Jorgenson, Peter Nelson, Lester Shephard, and Elsie M. Baldwin, *To Whom It May Interest*, 1927, CAR; *RH*, April 8, 1858.

⁸⁴*GV*, 27.

were: *Fifty Unanswerable Arguments Against Seventh-day Sabbath-keeping* by A. N. Seymour. Matteson thought he would find here everything he needed.⁸⁵

Later in the summer Matteson and Chris Jensen helped Jacob Cady harvest his wheat. When they paused for a rest the first day, Jacob Cady handed Matteson some old journals called *Review and Herald*, published by the Seventh-day Adventists. When Matteson read, in one issue, a refutation of all 50 of Seymour's *Unanswerable Arguments*, on the basis of biblical evidence, Matteson was convinced that the seventh-day Sabbath was still a holy day. Late Friday afternoon, Jensen asked Matteson what he thought of the articles. Matteson told him that they agreed with the Bible.⁸⁶

During the following week Matteson spent much time praying and meditating about the seventh-day Sabbath question. The following Sabbath Matteson stayed with Philander Cady and kept for the first time the seventh-day Sabbath together with him. Anna, Matteson's wife, was not so happy with her husband's decision, because he had already lost his job at Bloomfield, due to theological disagreements with the leadership and the congregation there. She feared he might lose his job at Brushville. "We are living on next to nothing as it is," she said. Matteson tried to comfort her by reminding her that so far the Lord had provided for all their needs.⁸⁷

Matteson asked Philander Cady how he learned of the Sabbath. "A few years ago, when I worked at Mackford," Philander began, "some traveling evangelists,

⁸⁵Ibid., 28; *ML*, 99.

⁸⁶*ML*, 99, 100.

⁸⁷*GV*, 29; *ML*, 102.

Hart, Everts, and Loughborough by name, set up a tent. They presented the Sabbath so clearly that I knew that I must obey.”⁸⁸

Matteson’s family and the Cadys spent every Sabbath together for the next two months, either in Matteson’s home or Philander Cady’s home. They talked much about the text in the book of Revelation which mentions those who “keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”⁸⁹ Philander Cady wanted Matteson to get acquainted with the Seventh-day Adventist Church.⁹⁰ In the autumn of 1863 he told Matteson of a quarterly gathering of Seventh-day Adventists in Mackford, Wisconsin. It was about forty-five miles from Matteson’s home in Poy Sippi. He had to go on foot, but he had been longing for fellowship with fellow believers at other places for some time so the distance meant nothing to him. Matteson wondered if they were true Christians like brother Philander Cady or if they were imbued with the same spirit as the Age-to-Come people had been.⁹¹

On his way to Mackford, Matteson visited a Sabbath-keeper near Berlin, Wisconsin. He lived far away from other Sabbath-keepers, and his wife was not very keen on preserving their faith. This man gave Matteson a book called *Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*. Matteson did not know the author and the

⁸⁸GV, 27. The full name of Hart is Josiah Sidney Hart (1843–1932). He was a pioneer traveling minister. The full name of Everts was Elon E. Everts (1807-1858). He was also a pioneer traveling minister. Loughborough full name was John Norton Loughborough (1832–1924). He was also a pioneer evangelist and an administrator.

⁸⁹ML, 103; Rev 12:17.

⁹⁰ML, 102.

⁹¹ML, 107.

donor told him that he did not rely on her. His remarks did not affect Matteson, who read the book with great interest, for two reasons: first, the reading of the book brought him closer to Christ and it encouraged him to be on his guard against any sin and Satan's snares and encouraged him to live for noble purposes, for God and heaven. Second, the book presented the coming world in such a loving way that it made his poor heart feel good. He took the book home, translated it into Danish and had his girls read it. However, his Danish translation was never published. Soon after Matteson's stopover, the one who had given him the book became a spiritist, believing that the dead could survive as spirits and communicate with the living.⁹²

Matteson found that the meetings by the Seventh-day Adventists were full of interest, and there was no lack in attendance. He thought the congregation manifested that nobility and integrity of soul which every child of God should possess. He felt also that they really lived in the fear of God.⁹³

What came as a surprise to Matteson at the Mackford quarterly gathering was the practice of foot-washing⁹⁴ before the participation in the Lord's Supper. After that meeting Matteson felt he had gained all the spiritual strength he needed in the days to come. He had found the spiritual fellowship he wanted to join—a church of Sabbath-keepers who expected the soon return of Jesus Christ. They kept the Sabbath, which was blessed and made holy in the Garden of Eden. When they prayed, their hearts ascended to the heavenly sanctuary to the Son of God, their High Priest. These

⁹²Ibid., 108, 109.

⁹³Ibid., 109.

⁹⁴*ML*, 111.

brothers and sisters believed that God alone was immortal, that death was a foe until the first resurrection. They also gave heed to the light of prophecy and believed in the soon return of God's Son.⁹⁵ Matteson said: "I wanted to join them, both with my heart and hands, to share with them in difficulty and suffering as well as in the wonderful reward."⁹⁶

As has been shown above, Matteson took many steps towards Adventism from 1859, when he described himself as an infidel, until late August or early September 1863, when he commenced keeping the seventh-day Sabbath. These steps may be viewed as transition steps towards Adventism and will be summed up as follows: Matteson's rejection of spiritualism, his acceptance of temperance, his cessation of cursing and coarse conversations, his wanting to become a Christian after reading the book, *Ironthorpe: the Pioneer Preacher*, his commencement of studying the Bible, his studies of the Sermon on the Mount, his listening to a blacksmith's prayer, his reading of the Baptist Creed, his baptism by immersion, his ordination as a minister, his understanding of foot washing before participating in the Lord's Supper, his rejection of the Age-to-Come teaching, Adventist literature on the mortality of the soul, fate of the ungodly, the second coming of Christ, and the seventh-day Sabbath, his meeting with Jacob Cady and Philander Cady, the book *Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*, and his attendance of a Seventh-day Adventist meeting at Mackford, Wisconsin. The major part of this process started

⁹⁵*ML*, 109, 110.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 110.

sometime in 1862 and lasted until August or September of 1863. This is confirmed by Matteson in a letter to James White dated October 30, 1863.

In this letter to James White in 1863 Matteson said that he had “been examining the different views held by the Advent people for some over a year” and that he now rejoiced “in the truth that the second coming of our Savior is not far distant.” In the same letter Matteson mentioned his belief concerning Christ’s incarnation; his suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, entrance into the sanctuary, and his pleading “now in the holiest of holies, before the mercy-seat,” for those who have transgressed God’s holy law. He continued by saying that during the previous summer he had talked with a Brother Cady about the Sabbath which he commenced keeping after “some examination and struggling,” when his heart at last was subdued “some two months ago.” Since his letter is dated October 30, 1863, Matteson must have begun keeping the seventh-day Sabbath sometime in late August or early September 1863. In the same letter Matteson mentioned that he had spent a “refreshing” Sabbath when he “attended the quarterly meeting at Mackford.”⁹⁷

In this first letter of the hundreds he wrote to the *Review and Herald* during his lifetime, Matteson expressed his “want [need] for tracts” in his Danish language, to distribute among Danes and also among Norwegians and Swedes, most of whom also understood Danish. He then said, “I sincerely hope that the Lord will open some way to have such tracts printed and scattered among the people before the last message of mercy shall be finished. Oh that the solemn sound of the third angel’s

⁹⁷Matteson, “From Bro. Matteson,” *RH*, November 10, 1863, 191.

message⁹⁸ may be carried to the ends of the earth, and that many may come out of Babylon to join the people of the living God.”⁹⁹

On returning home to Poy Sippi, Matteson did not at first speak publicly about his Sabbath-keeping and Adventist-related topics. However, he did so privately. After three months some of his members in the churches he served began to keep the Sabbath. Matteson says that after “five to six months” one whole congregation, with the exception of one family, kept the Sabbath.¹⁰⁰ Matteson does not specify to which of the three churches he was referring, but later in his autobiography he mentions the members at Poy Sippi as the “first fruits” of his ministry after he began keeping the Sabbath himself in 1863.¹⁰¹

L. M. Halswick says that “about forty members of [Matteson’s] church followed his example and a Danish Seventh-day Adventist church was organized in Poy Sippi. This was the second Adventist church to be organized among the Scandinavians.”¹⁰² The first was at Oakland, as stated in chapter 2.

Chilson, however, thinks that this acceptance of Seventh-day Adventism by Matteson’s entire congregation first took place at Brushville. “With the exception of

⁹⁸On the terms “third angel’s message” and “three angels’ messages,” see above, Preface, xxxiv, n. 49.

⁹⁹Matteson, “From Bro. Matteson,” *RH*, November 10, 1863, 191; alluding to Rev 14:8 and 18:2, 4.

¹⁰⁰*ML*, 104.

¹⁰¹*ML*, 118.

¹⁰²Louis Martin Halswick, *Mission Fields at Home* (Brookfield, IL: Pacific Press Publishing Association, n.d.), 29, 30.

one family,” he says, Matteson’s “Brushville congregation became Adventists, and the membership climbed to forty. Then he went to Poy Sippi and raised up a second congregation.”¹⁰³

Chilson also says that “in nearby Tustin on Lake Poygan lived a cluster of families” which also became Sabbath-keepers. Then he says, “The following spring (1864) Matteson conducted English meetings in Poy Sippi, and raised up another congregation.” Chilson goes on to say that the church at Brushville and the church at Poy Sippi merged “into a single church at Poy Sippi” including the Tustin cluster of Mikkelsens, Andersons, Nelsons, Hansons, Rasmussens, and Petersons.¹⁰⁴

Matteson’s statement that his Poy Sippi congregation was his “first fruits” was made in 1865 and again in 1890. When Matteson referred to the Poy Sippi Church as his “first fruits” he stated that it “was the first fruits of my labor as a Sabbath keeper.”¹⁰⁵ An approximate date for the organization of the church at Poy Sippi as a Seventh-day Adventist Church may be found based on the following information: In a letter from Matteson’s home in Poy Sippi, October 30, 1863, Matteson tells James White that he himself began keeping the Sabbath “about two months ago.”¹⁰⁶ Since the writing of the letter took place at the end of October, “two months” of Sabbath-

¹⁰³GV, 31.

¹⁰⁴Chilson, *Trial and Triumph*, 26, 27.

¹⁰⁵ML, 113-118; Matteson, *Providence*, 146. Perhaps Matteson’s reference to the Poy Sippi church as his “firstfruits” assumed the inclusion of the Brushville church in the Poy Sippi church, since by then the Brushville church no longer existed as a separate entity. That would reconcile Matteson’s memory with Chilson’s research.

¹⁰⁶Matteson, “From Bro. Matteson,” *RH*, Nov 10, 1863, 191.

keeping may suggest late August or early September as the time when Matteson himself started to keep the Sabbath as stated above.

In his autobiography, Matteson said that at the beginning he did not publicly tell about his Sabbath-keeping. However, he said that after “three months” some began keeping the Sabbath because of his private conversations with them. Then he said that “during five to six” months the whole congregation had accepted the doctrine, with the exception of one family. Whether one regards “three months” and “five to six” months as being consecutive months or commencing at the same time, they bring the reader to the first half of 1864 as the time of the organization of Matteson’s “first fruits” or the beginning of the Poy Sippi, Wisconsin, Seventh-day Adventist Church.¹⁰⁷

In June 1864 Matteson again wrote from Poy Sippi: “We want to move in harmony with the body” of the Seventh-day Adventist Church “and to join our State association at the first opportunity. It is our desire to go with the remnant of God’s people to mount Zion, and to give all the praise to the Lamb of God in his glorious kingdom, forever.”¹⁰⁸ By this time the church must have been organized, since Matteson at this time applied for membership in the Illinois-Wisconsin Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

¹⁰⁷*ML*, 104.

¹⁰⁸*RH*, July 5, 1864. Matteson is here referring to the Illinois-Wisconsin Conference which was organized after convening again Sept. 27–28, 1862, at Avon, Wisconsin, with W. S. Ingraham as chairman and Joseph G. Wood, secretary. At that time the following Wisconsin churches were listed as represented by delegates: Hundred Mile Grove, Marquette, Mackford, Rubicon, Oakland, Little Prairie, Franklin, and Avon.

The First Adventist Periodical in Danish-Norwegian

The need for publications for Scandinavians had by then become increasingly important. Isaac Sanborn writes: “Bro. Matteson is doing what he can to spread the truth among his people. It goes slow, however, as they cannot read the *Review* nor our books. They are all therefore very anxious to have some of our publications translated into their language. Bro. Matteson will freely translate, if it can be published.”¹⁰⁹ Ten years had passed since such a request had first been made by Gustaf Mellberg, and another eight years would pass before the leadership of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists approved in 1871 of Matteson’s launching a twenty-four-page monthly journal called *Advent Tidende*.¹¹⁰ The first issue of *Advent Tidende* was published in January 1872.¹¹¹ According to Halswick, it was the first Adventist periodical in a language other than English.¹¹² *Advent Tidende* proved a great blessing both in America and Scandinavia. Matteson remained the editor for several years, after which C. A. Thorp “became the editor and remained in that position for nearly 50 years.”¹¹³

Matteson’s publishing work had started in 1863 when he wrote by hand with “pen and ink” on a “large piece of paper,” a “twenty four page” paper in Danish-

¹⁰⁹*RH*, June 7, 1864.

¹¹⁰*GV*, 62.

¹¹¹*Advent Tidende* (Advent tidings) 1, no. 1 (January 1872); Halswick, *Mission Fields at Home*, 29, 30.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, 31.

¹¹³*Ibid.*, 33.

Norwegian on the “second coming of Christ, the question of immortality, and in addition to that articles on practical Christianity.” This handwritten paper was “carefully placed in a folder which contained a list of the subscribers’ names, and the order in which it should get around from house to house.” This is before he “obtained the light on the question of the Sabbath.”¹¹⁴

After Matteson had moved from Poy Sippi to Mackford in 1865, he once again became “anxious for literature in Danish-Norwegian.”¹¹⁵ This same year, “two years” after he decided to keep the seventh-day Sabbath, he wrote several times about the Sabbath.¹¹⁶ But he put it aside, because he did not believe that it would be of any use. “At last one Sunday morning it became clear to him” that he should “write about the Sabbath question for his countrymen, and he started writing.” By evening he had written a tract of sixteen pages.¹¹⁷ He therefore decided to travel to the Review and Herald publishing house in Battle Creek, Michigan, to talk with the leaders there. Elder James White was recovering from a stroke at this time, and “the men at the office gave Matteson no encouragement in his project.”¹¹⁸ The reason for this discouragement was that the publishing house had already published pamphlets in German which did not sell. Matteson was not easily turned away. He learned to set the type himself and “did not stop until he had printed a thousand copies of *Sabbatens*

¹¹⁴*ML*, 236.

¹¹⁵Halswick, *Mission Fields at Home*, 29, 30.

¹¹⁶*ML*, 286.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, 237.

¹¹⁸Chilson, *Trial and Triumph*, 28.

Dag (The Sabbath day).¹¹⁹ This was the first Danish-Norwegian tract published by the Review and Herald.¹²⁰

The eager reception of the tract throughout the field inspired Matteson in 1866 to apply to “the managers” of the Review and Herald Publishing House “to ascertain if they would print, for the use of Scandinavians,” a book in their own language. He was told that the publishing house could not print anything due to “a lack of funds.” Matteson then raised \$1,000 in cash with the help of the Danish and Norwegian believers and went to Battle Creek to handset the type for a book of more than 300 pages. Thus Matteson’s “desires were granted, and March 8, 1867,” he began setting the type for his first full-length book in Danish, titled *Liv og Død* (Life and Death).¹²¹ It took him three months to finish the publication of this book, about “the inheritance of the saints, life and immortality, and the punishment of the ungodly.” The book was in circulation at least to the end of nineteenth century among “Scandinavians in Europe, America, Finland and Iceland, [and] in English harbors, where Scandinavians journeyed.”¹²²

In the autumn of 1870 Matteson visited his “own home after an absence of one year and ten weeks.” He stayed at home for “two weeks and five days.” During those nineteen days at home, he translated the tract *Departing and Being with Christ*.

¹¹⁹GV, 43.

¹²⁰Halswick, *Mission Fields at Home*, 31. This tract was later expanded to a 64-page book, titled *Det Nye Testamentes Sabbat* (The New Testament Sabbath) (*ML*, 238), and still later translated into Swedish (Halswick, *Mission Fields at Home*, 31).

¹²¹Halswick, *Mission Fields at Home*, 31; *ML*, 238.

¹²²GV, 48; *ML*, 238, 239.

About the same time he “translated twenty-five hymns and selected and copied one hundred and fifty Danish hymns” for a Danish hymnbook.¹²³

As already mentioned, Matteson’s real dream came true in 1872 when the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists honored his request for a monthly periodical which began to be published at the Review and Herald office January 1, 1872. To begin with, it was a “24-page monthly journal in magazine form,” but the “following year the size” was “increased to thirty-two pages.” The magazine was called *Advent Tidende* (*Adventist Herald*).¹²⁴

Matteson and the SDA Church in Oakland, Wisconsin

As shown in chapter 2 above, the Sabbath-keeping Adventist, Waterman Phelps, who lived at Koshkonong, Wisconsin, began visiting the Norwegian believers at Oakland, Wisconsin, in 1858, but could not speak any of the Scandinavian languages. He communicated with them by using hand signs and pointing to verses in the Bible. From then to 1864, the Oakland people had been longing for a minister who could speak their own tongue.¹²⁵

Andrew Olsen, one of the leaders of the Oakland church, wrote a letter to Matteson after he had learned of the good news that he was working among the Scandinavians. Many years later, Andrew Olsen’s son, O. A. Olsen, recalled, “We were very happy when we read in the *Review and Herald* that Elder [J. G.] Matteson

¹²³ *RH*, October 18, 1870, 141.

¹²⁴ Halswick, *Mission Fields at Home*, 31; *GV*, 62.

¹²⁵ *GV*, 36.

had accepted the truth. I well remember how I ran to my parents with the paper and showed them the good news.”¹²⁶

In the early summer of 1864 Matteson “made the hundred-mile journey from Poy Sippi to Oakland, Wisconsin.”¹²⁷ His first impression of the Oakland Church was that most of the members had put away all differences and all desire for supremacy and therefore had come close together in Christian fellowship. When Matteson had related to them his life’s story and “his recent discovery of the third angel’s message,” Andrew Olsen showed him a “clearing in the woods where they had just begun to build” a church.¹²⁸ Andrew Olsen then offered to build a cabin for Matteson and his family if he should choose to come and settle there.¹²⁹ Matteson did not immediately act on that offer. While in Oakland, however, he conducted twenty-seven public meetings, most of them in Norwegian.¹³⁰

During this visit to the Oakland Church, Matteson discovered that the church was facing a problem. The very first elder of the church, Samuel A. Bragg, had been so impressed with a young man whom he wanted as his assistant, that according to the option allowed by federal law during the Civil War, Bragg had raised \$300 to secure the young man’s release from the Army. Matteson described the young man as follows: He was a “powerful man to preach. He had the ability to imitate other preachers, and a splendid memory. Beside this he had a voice which penetrated like

¹²⁶Halswick, *Mission Fields at Home*, 30.

¹²⁷GV, 36.

¹²⁹Ibid.

¹³⁰RH, November 15, 1864, 159.

that of a donkey and a face as brazen as a lion's.”¹³¹ Matteson thought these abilities could be acceptable, but because the young man laughed just as much when he talked about his sermons and prayers as when he talked about worldly things, Matteson thought him disqualified to be a minister. When the young man took the money and much more and disappeared to Canada, Bragg and his wife were naturally quite unhappy with the situation, as was the congregation. As a result, the congregation voted to replace Bragg with Andrew Olsen, who remained the first elder at Oakland for the next twenty years.¹³² He would eventually be viewed in his neighborhood as the founder of the Oakland SDA Church.¹³³

Bragg apparently blamed Matteson for this turn of events and complained to the Illinois-Wisconsin conference, which decided not to pay Matteson any salary. Though in October 1864 the Adventists gave him a license to preach, he received only \$20 for traveling expenses,¹³⁴ until after his ordination to the ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1867.¹³⁵

¹³¹*ML*, 116-117.

¹³²*Evangelists Sendebud*, September 23, 1908, 588.

¹³³“First Church of Its Kind in the World,” *Jefferson County Union*, December 19, 1937. By 1862, ordination in a previous denomination was no longer sufficient. In answering the question, “Shall preachers from other denominations embracing the message, preach and baptize among us, on the strength of their former ordination and standing as ministers?” the Michigan Conference session passed the following resolution: “Resolved, That ministers of other denominations, embracing present truth, should give proof of being called to preach the message, and be ordained among us, before administering the ordinances.” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, October 14, 1862, 157.

¹³⁴*ML*, 118.

¹³⁵*RH*, October 29, 1864.

Matteson's Move to Oakland and Ordination

On July 5, 1864, the day Matteson returned home to Poy Sippi from his visit to Oakland, his second daughter was born and named Christina. In the spring of 1865, Matteson moved from Poy Sippi to Mackford with his family. Soon after they settled there, Andrew Olsen of Oakland wrote a letter to Anna, Matteson's wife, saying: "We have just completed a two-room dwelling where you and the children may stay while your husband is away preaching the message. If you can arrange to come here, we will see to your comfort."¹³⁶ The two-room dwelling was a gift from Andrew Olsen to the Mattesons.¹³⁷

In mid-November Anna, then seven months pregnant, started her journey to Oakland with her two children. They faced gusty winds and had to rely on the horses for a sense of direction. Andrew Olsen did not know she was coming. "The fury of the storm abated and just ahead Anna could make out hazy shapes of homes and barns. It was the village of Jefferson. Oakland lay only a few miles farther on. They reached the safety and warmth of the Olsen cabin before nightfall." In mid-January 1867 Anna and John Matteson's son, Samuel, was born.¹³⁸

O. A. Olsen says that it was a great joy for the church at Oakland when Matteson joined them there, because until then no one could relate to them "the truth"

¹³⁶GV, 36-37.

¹³⁷"First Church of Its Kind in the World," *Jefferson County Union*, December 19, 1937.

¹³⁸GV, 38, 40.

in their own language.¹³⁹ That Matteson's ordination took place in 1867 is confirmed in Uriah Smith's October 1 editorial in the *Review and Herald*.¹⁴⁰ From September 19 to 22, 1867, Smith attended the convocation of Sabbath-keepers from Illinois and Wisconsin, at Johnstown Center, Wisconsin. In addition to James and Ellen G. White, Elders Sanborn, Steward, Andrews, Blanchard, and Matteson of the Wisconsin and Illinois conference were also present. At the beginning of the convocation, only 400 were present, but by Sunday, when twelve people were baptized and Ellen G. White spoke at 2 p.m., the number had increased to "at least twelve hundred persons."¹⁴¹

Said Uriah Smith: "At the close of the service Sabbath forenoon," September 21, 1867, "Brother John Matteson was set apart to the work of the gospel ministry by prayer and the laying on of hands. Prayer by Bro. Sanborn; the right hand of fellowship, and charge by Bro. White."¹⁴² Matteson was now a fully authorized minister of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He spoke Sunday evening at the convention and closed the series with 1 Thess 5:16-23.¹⁴³

¹³⁹O. A. Olsen, "En anden trofast Arbejder falden," Obituary for J. G. Matteson, *Evangelists Sendebud* and *Sandhedens Tidende* (Gospel messenger and tidings of the truth), American ed., April 15, 1896, 181. "The truth" is an Adventist expression for the biblical message that forms the foundation of their faith.

¹⁴⁰Uriah Smith, "Editorial Correspondence, No. 2," *RH*, October 1, 1867, 248.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*

¹⁴²*Ibid.* Since according to Smith, September 24, 1867 was a Tuesday, the previous Sabbath, the Sabbath of Matteson's ordination, must have been September 21, 1867.

¹⁴³*RH*, October 29, 1867, 305.

The Mattesons stayed at Oakland for eleven years. Matteson says it was a most “peaceful . . . place,”¹⁴⁴ providing them with both comfort and ease. He thought the climate was excellent. The children could run through the fields and into the woods. He thought they grew healthier than ever before. “It was a great loss for us and them, when we later had to move from Oakland,” said Matteson.¹⁴⁵

In 1870 Matteson received a letter from a Scandinavian in Chicago. He wanted Matteson to come to the city and preach on the second coming of Christ. Matteson “accepted the invitation, and found a company of interested persons.” They hired a hall for him “near Milwaukee and Alston Avenue.” The attendance was small, but those who came seemed deeply impressed. “A small company of believers was raised up.” In the autumn of the next year “these persons bought a lot at 1244 West Erie Street, and put up a house of worship, which was the first Seventh-day Adventist church to be erected in a large city.” The church was organized in 1872 with twenty-nine members. The following year James and Ellen G. White visited the chapel on West Erie Street. “Sister White spoke about the need of working for the foreign population in the city and encouraged Elder Matteson in his work.”¹⁴⁶ By 1874 the membership had grown to fifty-nine persons.¹⁴⁷

During this time “Matteson became a powerful preacher of the Advent message, with special emphasis on the love of God. He conducted revivals and

¹⁴⁴*ML*, 114.

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶Halswick, *Mission Fields at Home*, 30.

¹⁴⁷Matteson, “Chicago, Ill.,” *RH*, February 24, 1874, 86.

established churches in Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, and Missouri. He was also a ready writer. He prepared tracts and pamphlets and edited a songbook in Danish-Norwegian.”¹⁴⁸ In addition, Matteson “wrote many hymns and even composed music with them.”¹⁴⁹

Matteson’s Relationship to James and Ellen G. White

Because of the central role played by James and Ellen G. White in the formative years of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and Matteson’s role in organizing churches among Scandinavians in America and later in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, his relationship with these two leaders is of critical importance. It is also important because of Ellen White’s later three visits to Norway to assist Matteson in his work there. That will be dealt with in a later chapter.

Ellen White herself found this correspondence between her and Matteson so important that she had it published in her first volume of *Testimonies to the Church*.¹⁵⁰ The following words of Ellen G. White express her sorrow and discouragement in 1867, before Matteson came to her aid: “My interest,” she wrote,

is in this work [of the Seventh-day Adventist Church]; my life is interwoven with it. When Zion prospers, I am happy; if she languishes, I am sad, desponding, discouraged. I saw that God's people were in an alarming condition, and His favor was being removed from them. I pondered upon this sad picture day and night, and pleaded in bitter anguish: “O Lord, give not Thine heritage to reproach. Let not the heathen say, Where is their God?” I felt that I was cut loose from everyone at the head of the work and was virtually standing alone. I dared not trust anyone.

¹⁴⁸SDAE, s.v. “Matteson, John G.”

¹⁴⁹Christian, *Sons of the North*, 103.

¹⁵⁰E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1 [original 1867] (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 596.

In the night I have awakened my husband, saying: “I am afraid that I shall become an infidel.” Then I would cry for the Lord to save me by His own powerful arm. I could not see that my testimonies were regarded, and I entertained the thought that perhaps my work in the cause was done. We had appointments at Bushnell, but I told my husband that I could not go.

Her discouragement lifted when her husband, James White, returned from the post office with a letter from Brother Matteson, describing a “remarkable dream” he had about the Whites. The dream was so significant to Ellen White that she quoted it at length in her book, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1.

“Dear Brother White: May the blessing of God be with you, and these lines find you still prospering and improving in health and spiritual strength. I feel very thankful to the Lord for his goodness to you, and trust that you may yet enjoy perfect health and freedom in the proclamation of the last message.

I have had a remarkable dream about you and Sister White, and feel it my duty to relate the same to you as far as I can remember. I dreamed that I related it to Sister White, as well as the interpretation thereof, which also was given me in the dream. When I awoke, something urged me to get up and write down all the particulars, lest I should forget them, but I neglected to do so, partly because I was tired, and partly because I thought it was nothing but a dream. But seeing that I never dreamed of you before, and that this dream was so intelligent, and so intimately connected with you, I have come to the conclusion that I ought to tell you. The following is all I can remember of it:

“I was in a large house where there was a pulpit somewhat like those we use in our meetinghouses. On it stood many lamps which were burning. These lamps needed a constant supply of oil, and quite a number of us were engaged in carrying oil and filling them. Brother White and his companion were busily engaged, and I noticed that Sister White poured in more oil than any other. Then brother White went to a door which opened into a warehouse, where there were many barrels of oil. He opened the door and went in, and Sister White followed. Just then a company of men came along, with a great quantity of black stuff that looked like soot, and heaped it all upon Brother and Sister White, completely covering them with it. I felt much grieved, and looked anxiously to see the end of these things. I could see Brother and Sister W. both working hard to get out from under the soot, and after a long struggle they came out as bright as ever, and the evil men and the soot disappeared. Then Brother and Sister White engaged again more heartily than ever in supplying the lamps with oil, but Sister W. still had the precedence.

“I dreamed that the following was the interpretation: The lamps represented the remnant people. The oil was the truth and heavenly love, of which God’s people needed a constant supply. The people engaged in supplying the lamps were the servants of God laboring in the harvest. Who the evil company were in

particular I could not tell, but they were men moved upon by the devil, who directed their evil influence especially against Brother and Sister White. The latter were in great distress for a season, but were at last delivered by the grace of God and their own earnest efforts. Then finally the power of God rested upon them, and they acted a prominent part in the proclamation of the last message of mercy. But Sister White had a richer supply of heavenly wisdom and love than the rest.

“This dream has rather strengthened my confidence that the Lord will lead you out and finish the work of restoration that is begun, and that you will once more enjoy the Spirit of God as you did in times past, yea, more abundantly. Forget not that humility is the door that leads to the rich supplies of the grace of God. May the Lord bless you and your companion and children, and grant us to meet in the heavenly kingdom. Yours in bonds of Christian love.

John Matteson.”

Oakland, Wisconsin, July 15, 1867.¹⁵¹

Ellen G. White’s response to the dream was as follows.

This dream gave me some encouragement. I had confidence in Brother Matteson. Before I saw him with my natural eyes, his case was shown me in vision, in contrast with that of F of Wisconsin. The latter was utterly unworthy to bear the name of Christian, much more to be a messenger; but Brother Matteson was shown me as one who possessed humility, and who, if he maintained his consecration, would be qualified to point souls to the Lamb of God. Brother Matteson had no knowledge of my trials of mind. Not a line had ever passed between us, and the dream coming when and from whom it did, looked to me like the hand of God reached forth to help me.¹⁵²

These few words by Ellen G. White about Matteson must have meant more than a thousand words of others, since he believed that she was the messenger of the Lord.¹⁵³ And, as mentioned above, it must have meant much to Matteson when later that same year, she and her husband James White were present at his ordination and James himself gave him the right hand of fellowship and read him the charge at the

¹⁵¹Ibid., 597-598.

¹⁵²Ibid., 599.

¹⁵³Adventists believe that Ellen G. White exercised the gift of prophecy. They often refer to her as a prophet, but she preferred the term “messenger of the Lord,” because she said her work embraced more than that of prophecy.

ordination. No wonder that Matteson thought that the Lord himself had been at the feast by his holy “Comforter . . . as his representative”¹⁵⁴ in Johnstown Center during the convocation of Seventh-day Adventists in September 1867. Matteson was soon to face the most difficult decision of his life. These good traveling provisions coming from the pen of the messenger of the Lord would be crucial to Matteson’s future obligations in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.

The first Norwegian-born President of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, O. A. Olsen, later summarized Matteson’s qualifications and character:

I have hardly met a man so well equipped of nature to be a blessing for his fellow human beings. He was pleasant to deal with, interesting in conversation, with a rich supply of practical illustrations. As a public speaker I regard him as a model. His preaching was pleasant, logical, convincing, and presented a tenderness that won the hearts. In debate he was a ready wit and was feared by his opponents. Matteson suffered from poor health and in spite of that got as much work done as nobody else I know.

Brother Matteson can justly be called the father of our Scandinavian literature. Not before the day of judgment will the result of his work be revealed. . . .

From the beginning to the end Matteson stood firmly for the message. He had many battles to fight and was often placed in difficult circumstances which will befall all those who promote the message, but he never hesitated. Were it not for his strength of will and determination he could not with his poor health have accomplished so much and endured so long. His faithful example ought to be a help to us all.

With the passing of Brother Matteson the cause has lost a faithful, godly, and hardworking laborer. Personally I felt a great loss, for I could see nobody who could take his place. But the work is the Lord’s, and to God’s glory we can see that the work still moves forward, both in America and Europe. Soon the final events for which we have waited will come. Then every faithful hero of the cross will stand up for his reward.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴*RH*, October 29, 1867, 305.

¹⁵⁵*GV*, 128.

Lewis Harrison Christian characterizes Matteson as follows: “We have never known a man with a mind so versatile and well trained. He was kind, humorous, and most understanding. His converts and fellow workers trusted him as few ministers have been trusted. He was not only a burden bearer, but a real father to his people.”¹⁵⁶

Much later, after Matteson had gone to Norway, a rumor at Battle Creek had it that Elder Matteson was lazy at his office in Christiania and not breaking new ground in new places. Matteson rolled back these rumors in a letter to James White in 1880: “I have known a good deal . . . about sleeping nights on the ground, or in haystacks, or on the floor in shanties, and log huts, and dugouts, in schoolhouses on the floor or on the benches with my boots under my head, in moldy houses and damp beds, and wading through mud and water and sloughs, and walking long and weary roads on foot, et cetera, et cetera. I begin to think I have about done enough now.”¹⁵⁷

The second half of Matteson’s life and how he became the second official missionary of the SDA church to Europe and Scandinavia is the subject of chapters 4 and 5.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶Christian, *Sons of the North*, 104.

¹⁵⁷Quoted in *GV*, 90.

¹⁵⁸For a short chronological summary of Matteson’s life, see Appendix A.

CHAPTER 4

MISSION TO DENMARK AND NORWAY¹

Introduction

In 1874 James White, president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, summed up his new awareness of a world-wide mission as follows:

Never were we so fully impressed with the fact that the responsibilities of a world-wide mission were pressing upon our people, as during the religious services and business sessions at the recent Michigan Camp-meeting. For a few years past, the work had been greatly increased upon our lands. Urgent calls for publications in different languages, and laborers for people of other languages have increased. We have already made good beginnings for Danes [-Norwegians], Swedes and French, and are anxiously waiting for a door to be opened for the Germans. And the work is widely and rapidly extended among those who read and speak the English language, in our own country and others.²

That same year, 1874, J. N. Andrews and two children arrived in Neuchatel, Switzerland. Albert and Luke Vuilleumier met them at the depot and gave them a “cordial welcome” as the first official missionaries of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.³

Three years later James White wrote in the *Review and Herald* that “we have seen for several years that a way was prepared for a Mission to Denmark and Norway and for

¹The title of chapter 4 is derived from Matteson’s own words as he headed for his new mission field of Scandinavia. Matteson, “Mission Tour to Denmark and Norway,” *Review and Herald*, May 31, 1877, 172.

²*RH*, August 25, 1874, 76.

³*RH*, November 17, 1874, 166.

the past year have felt anxious that Eld. Matteson should return to his native land, and there preach and publish the great truths connected with the last message.”⁴

Matteson’s letter of acceptance, dated March 23, 1877, said: “I think the time has come when I must get ready to go to Denmark, to labor in the interest of the last message.” Then he explained that it “is a great sacrifice on my part to go, and there is no undertaking that I have been so slow to decide on as this.” He nevertheless thought that everything pointed in that direction and that he would be going against the will and the blessing of the Lord if he “refused to go.” James White was pleased with Matteson’s acceptance of “his Mission to Denmark and Norway” and was also impressed with Matteson’s “words of expressive faith and confiding love.”⁵

Matteson, however, thought for a while that O. A. Olsen of Oakland, Wisconsin, might be more fitted and better qualified to go than he himself. He did his utmost to convince Olsen to go, but he “positively refused to do so.” Olsen, however, promised Matteson to do his best to preach for his countrymen in America and thus “exchange the school for the field next week.”⁶

Matteson no longer had any excuse not to go. He also reflected upon much good advice he had received from S. N. Haskell⁷ and other leaders among his own countrymen, who were anxious that “the time has come for this move to be made.” The reason for this was that every month about 260 copies of *Advent Tidende* were sent to Denmark, about

⁴James White, *RH*, April 19, 1877, 124.

⁵Matteson to James White, March 23, 1877.

⁶James White, *RH*, April 19, 1877, 124.

⁷Stephen Nelson Haskell (1833–1922) was a successful Adventist evangelist, administrator, and author of several books.

60 to Norway, and some to Sweden also. The readers of *Advent Tidende* in Scandinavia wrote “favorable letters” to relatives in America and to the General Conference headquarters, requesting someone to come and teach them.⁸

In making his final decision, Matteson requested the blessing of the leadership of the church. “Before I go,” he wrote,

I want to take a position in full harmony and sympathy with the General Conf. Committee. I feel the necessity of this, and feel that it is a privilege for me to do so. I therefore pledge myself to lead out in nothing independently, but to seek your counsel in every important matter, and in short, to act, not as a private individual, but as a representative of the S. D. Adventists of America, laboring in fear of God, and in the love of my brethren.⁹

James White was moved to make the following reply:

The foregoing statements from Eld. Matteson will touch the feelings of all of his brethren, whether Scandinavian or American. And they will give him their hearty sympathy, and follow him to his new field of labor by their prayers and with their means. His statements respecting the relations he wishes to sustain to his American brethren are frank, full, and satisfactory. In behalf of the General Conference we as freely state that Eld. Matteson will be sustained in his important contemplated mission by our counsel and prayers and means of those who have the missionary spirit.

In closing, James White said, referring not only to Matteson, but also to J. N. Andrews, who had sailed for Switzerland in 1874: “This movement of sending [not merely publications, but] our ablest live ministers to Europe will give all our people greater interest in our world-wide message.”¹⁰

Thus John G. Matteson became the second official missionary, the very man who so many in America of Scandinavian origin, and in Scandinavia itself, had asked God to

⁸*HS*, 60, 61.

⁹*RH*, April 19, 1877, 124.

¹⁰*RH*, April 19, 1877, 124.

send to their Nordic countries in addition to the literature already received. Matteson would continue the work of Hans Tausen of Denmark, Hans Nielsen Hauge of Norway, and the child preachers of Sweden.

Preparing for Departure

The “advancement of Elder Matteson’s mission to Denmark” was of the greatest concern to the General Conference Committee. A *Review* article in June 1877 urged Adventists to donate money “without delay,” because Matteson “will want [need] means immediately on his arrival in Denmark to commence his work of preaching and publishing.” The article explained that “the Seventh-day Adventists have two Missions in Europe.” J. N. Andrews is “our ‘ambassador for Christ,’ to represent our doctrine and practices in Switzerland, France, Germany, Italy, and where else the providence of God may give him an open door in Europe.” Matteson, on the other hand, was “sent to his native country in Europe to represent the Seventh-day Adventists in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.”¹¹

In preparation for the “Danish-Norwegian Mission in Europe,” Matteson spent “about two months writing the *Advent Tidende*.” Anticipating a great deal of travel and lack of a settled home for the first few months in Europe, Matteson and his wife decided not to take the children along at first. This necessitated finding suitable foster parents for them. They found a home for two of their children with Adventist church members in

¹¹General Conference Committee, “European Missions,” *RH*, June 7, 1877, 180, 181.

Naanah, Wisconsin.¹² Their three youngest children they left in Oakland, where the family had lived for the past eleven years. Matteson and his wife, Anna Sivertsen, left Oakland, May 11, 1877. On their way to New York, they visited for a few days his young church in Chicago. After that they spent a week in Battle Creek, Michigan, where they left the two eldest girls to attend Battle Creek College. Monday night, May 21, George Amadon of the Review and Herald Publishing House took the Mattesons to the railway station as they left Battle Creek for New York City.¹³ They arrived in New York, May 23, ready to depart for the Old World, yet keenly missing their seven children whom they left behind.¹⁴

The voyage went according to plan. Matteson and his wife left New York on Friday, May 24, 1877, on the German steamship *Pomerania*, for Hamburg, Germany.¹⁵ In addition to leaving his children behind, Matteson also left some “1000 Scandinavian Sabbath-keepers” whom he had been instrumental in leading to the church.¹⁶

As the coastline of America disappeared in the distance Matteson reflected upon the fact that he was now speedily leaving “the Land of Freedom, where he had had a

¹²*RH*, May 31, 1877, 172, 173. Matteson spent four days in Naanah, holding meetings in a school-house “crowded every time with attentive hearers,” and also ordained J. P. Jasperson as local elder for the Naanah church.

¹³*Ibid.*; *RH*, May 24, 1877, 168; Milton R. Hook, *Flames over Battle Creek* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1977), 58, 59. George Washington Amadon (1832-1913) joined the Review and Herald publishing group in Rochester, New York, when he was only 21 years old. He served the publishing house for 50 years in various capacities, including editor of the *Youth's Instructor* (1858-1864). *SDAE*, 1995 ed., s.v. “Amadon, G. W.”

¹⁴*RH*, May 31, 1877, 173.

¹⁵*AT*, July 1877, 217; *RH*, May 31, 1877, 173; *ML*, 185.

¹⁶*RH*, February 27, 1879, 68.

friendly home for twenty two years—away from the Land of Light where his soul had found peace in Christ—away from brothers and sisters, to whom Christ’s supreme love had connected him—away from the field he had worked for about fourteen years, the best years of his life—away from his mother and his children.”¹⁷ As they approached the coast of England, the increasing geographical distance between themselves and their children caused their “tears” to flow “freely.”¹⁸

They arrived in Hamburg, Germany, on Tuesday, June 5, and left Hamburg the very next morning for Vejle, Denmark. Matteson wrote on the train from Hamburg to Vejle that there had been many freethinkers on board the vessel from America.¹⁹ He was satisfied with the comfort of the vessel’s second class, but complained about the heavy drinking that took place at night. On board ship he met one person who subscribed to *Advent Tidende*. Matteson never allowed an opportunity to escape him to tell others about the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Three Angels’ Messages and was happy for the opportunity on board.²⁰ Traveling to Vejle, a town on the east coast of Jutland, Denmark, Matteson took a keen interest in the trains, the roads, and other aspects of life in his homeland.²¹

¹⁷*AT*, July 1877, 217.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹*ML*, 186. *AT*, July 1877, 217.

²⁰*ML*, 186.

²¹*AT*, August 1877, 250.

The Preparation of Scandinavia for the Adventist Mission

Matteson was the right man, at the right place, at the right time, because he spoke the language of the countries he was to work in, he was well educated, and he had a very long and good experience of preaching and publishing, and thus fitted perfectly the “American model” of the Seventh-day Adventist Church for evangelistic outreach at this time. This model was defined as follows: “If it be true that preaching can do but little without publication, it is quite as true that publication will do little without preaching.”²² James White also referred to this model when he said that Matteson would be returning to his native land to “preach and publish the great truths connected with the last message.” The interest for a missionary to come to the Nordic countries was equally great on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Before Matteson had arrived in Denmark to bring to the Scandinavian people the “doctrines peculiar to the Seventh-day Adventists” which he himself had “embraced,” he had prepared the way by his publications, especially the journal *Advent Tidende*, since 1872.²³ Matteson himself characterized his journal as the “Danish-Norwegian monthly.”²⁴

R. E. Appenzeller, in an article titled, “Paper Began Adventist Work in Scandinavia,” referred to the influence of *Advent Tidende*. According to Appenzeller and the historian Øivind Gjertsen, it was reported in the *Review and Herald* in 1874 that a Mr. and Mrs. Reirsen of Norway, along with several others, had begun to keep the Sabbath

²²*RH*, June 7, 1877, 181.

²³*RH*, April 19, 1877, 124.

²⁴*RH*, October 27, 1874, 142.

because of their reading of *Advent Tidende*. In response to the call from these presumably first believers in Norway and others, Matteson set sail for Scandinavia.^{25 26}

Among those who wanted the Adventist message to be brought to Scandinavia was a Swede, P. Palmbla of LaPorte, Indiana. He had become a Seventh-day Adventist after emigrating to the United States, and was now sending literature back home to his native land, Sweden.²⁷ He was also hoping that a Scandinavian could be sent to Scandinavia to introduce the message there.

Palmbla had heard in Sweden the message of Christ's Second Advent, but for a long time had not heeded it. In the fall of 1842 and the winter of 1843, a little girl preached it in "the Parish of Falseryd." Palmbla pointed out that only "small children under age, whom the law of the State could not restrain," were at first permitted to "speak freely and unharmed." He also said that in "Sweden there was no liberty as in this country to preach, for all must belong to the Lutheran church; and if anyone saw otherwise, he did not dare to reveal it, much less to try to teach others, as he would be fined or put in prison."²⁸

²⁵R. E. Appenzeller, "Paper Began Adventist Work in Scandinavia," *RH*, May 19, 1977, 14. Appenzeller was the Publishing Director of the Northern Europe-West Africa Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, stationed in England. See also Øivind Gjertsen, "The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway: A Factual Account," in Sigmund Skard, ed., *Americana Norvegica—Norwegian Contribution to American Studies*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press/University of Oslo, 1968), 78. See also *SDAE*, s.v., "Norway."

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷*RH*, July 21, 1874, 46.

²⁸*RH*, August 4, 1874, 62.

According to Palmbla, after about nine months, the child preaching “was declared by the authorities to be a disease, and they had to take medicine” and some were even brought to “the hospitals to be cured.” Nevertheless, people went in “masses on sleighs and afoot, when this message was much spoken of, to the places where the preachers were, who mostly were poor cottagers.” Pamela’s wife suggested that they should go and find out “what this is and means.” So they went to a cottage where a girl “six or eight years old” was to preach. When they came they noticed that the little girl “went around among the people, who asked her questions, which she answered as a child usually does.” When the cottage had been filled up with people and was “surrounded by a great number” the little girl’s “behavior was changed entirely, both in boldness and motions, which clearly indicated that she was moved by an invisible power, and not her own natural gifts.” She began to “speak with a voice quite different from her usual sound, and said: ‘Fear God and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come [Rev 14:6-7].’” She then went on to “reprove sins, as drinking, theft, adultery, swearing, backbiting, and churchgoers for visiting church with worldly business in view, instead of listening to God’s word and conforming their lives according to it.”²⁹

After the meeting the Palmblas “went home with stricken and trembling hearts.” When they read in the Bible: “Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess 5:19-21), they decided for awhile to follow the message of the child preachers. Later Palmbla and his wife listened to another girl whose “behavior and voice were just like the first.” The Palmblas maintained that the

²⁹Ibid.

foundation laid by the preaching children some thirty years earlier led them to accept the Adventist message when they heard it again in America.³⁰

In the middle of January 1874, “the new Swedish monthly” called *Svensk Advent Härold* (Swedish Advent herald) began publication at the Review and Herald publishing house in Battle Creek, Michigan. The *Review* reported that “Bro. Chas. Carlstedt, of Chicago, a native of Sweden, and a teacher in that tongue, has removed to this place to take charge of the literary work connected with it.” G. I. Butler did not expect the new monthly to be “self-supporting at first,” but urged that “the time has come for us to strike out in earnest in the fulfillment of our mission, that ‘nations, kindreds, tongues, and people,’ shall be enlightened with rays of truth.”³¹

In response, the Swede John E. Nordström wrote:

Many thanks to our American brethren for all the kindness done to us Swedes. When we see with what love and self-sacrifice they are working for our enlightenment relative to the word of God, we are convinced that this glorious cause is carried forward by the Spirit of God, and this is indeed the message that the Scriptures declare must go to ‘peoples, nations, tongues and kings.’ And we are encouraged to take hold and work together with you for the salvation of those souls who are finally to constitute the people referred to in Rev. 14:12.

Nordström also extended his special thanks to “Bro. Geo. I. Butler” for “the much needed Swedish paper, entitled *Svensk Advent Härold*.”³²

N. S. Melkjær of Denmark and a former Baptist was also extremely thankful to receive the monthly journal *Advent Tidende* in his own tongue. In 1874 he wrote after coming home from a long journey that he had been delighted in finding that *Advent*

³⁰Ibid.

³¹*RH*, December 30, 1873, 21.

³²*RH*, March 3, 1874, 94.

Tidende had arrived. He thought he had learned more from eight copies of *Advent Tidende* on the prophecies than from eighteen volumes of *Danske Evangelist* (the Danish Baptist monthly). He was happy for its doctrinal content and especially for its emphasis on “thorough repentance and of living faith and a holy life” as preparation “for the coming kingdom.” Melkjær also appreciated the journal’s stress on the Christian’s obligation to keep all the commandments of the Lord, including the fourth commandment with its special attention to keep the Sabbath strictly. He also said that the “nearness of the second advent of our Saviour cheers my heart, strengthens my faith, increases my love, and quickens the blessed hope.”³³

Matteson commented that the “writer of this letter has been an active preacher and colporteur among the Baptists in Denmark for many years.” “I am acquainted with many of his friends in this country, who testify that he is a talented and pious man.” Matteson had “corresponded with him for some time past,” and found “that he understands the Danish language well and is a good penman.” Matteson also pointed out that the “Danish brethren in Neenah have sent him books and tracts to the amount of \$5.00 to commence with.” Matteson had also “learned of two other families in Denmark who have recently embraced the Sabbath.” “One of them,” said Matteson, “worked on the public highway, and had to give up his employment in order to keep the Sabbath. This is no small thing in that country, where thousands of the laboring class have to work hard,” without which “they cannot supply their families with sufficient food.” “Nevertheless,” continued

³³*RH*, May 19, 1874, 182.

Matteson, “the Lord will take care of his people, bless his truth, and move his own cause forward to prepare a people for the coming of the Lord.”³⁴

In the *Review and Herald* in 1876, Matteson told about Mogens Abraham Sommer of Bredballe Strand, Vejle, Denmark, who, with some acquaintances, was keeping the seventh-day Sabbath and was also convinced that Sunday-keeping, “infant sprinkling, confirmation,” etc., were inventions of the pope. “Yet there is a great step from the understanding of this to the yielding of obedience to the commandment,” Sommer observed. He said he had presented his views “on the Sabbath to our congressmen, as they are now about to present some regulations concerning the holidays,” hoping they would change the Sabbath, or rather the keeping of Sunday, “from the first to the seventh day of the week,” but without any success. The officials told him that “the Jews keep the seventh day, but the Christians keep the first day in memory of the resurrection of Christ,” though they could not find a “syllable” in the Bible to support their assertion. Sommer described this as “the great deception of the pope which through the 1500 years has gained a reputation, and the ignorant hold on to it, as they do to so many other papal errors.”³⁵

Sommer had been a preacher of the gospel for “twenty five years” and published the paper *Indøvelse i Christendommen* (Practicing Christianity) for some time, in which in 1874 he had criticized the Lutheran clergy for their dead orthodoxy and for reciting the ceremonies, even the Lord’s Prayer, with such coldness and unbelief, that Sommer thought “they made no effort at all to do his [God’s] will.” Sommer then asked the

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵*RH*, May 4, 1876, 141.

question: “Is it not reasonable to ask such hardened souls, who always resist the Holy Ghost, to cease to take the name of God in vain; to cease to mock God by calling him Father, when they have no desire at all to be his obedient children?” This criticism was especially launched “against Notary Public Wadum of Vejle” who in turn demanded that Sommer be sentenced to “six months imprisonment, to pay all the costs of the case,” and to have Sommer’s paper “confiscated.”³⁶

Matteson reported that Sommer “came before different courts and was finished in February, 1876. He was first sentenced to four months in prison and to pay the cost, but appealed to the circuit court and finally to the supreme court, where he was sentenced to two months in prison and to pay the cost, amounting to about two hundred crowns (\$50 in gold).” Sommer was released from prison April 7, 1876. That was only a little more than a year before Matteson arrived in Vejle to commence his preaching and publishing work in Scandinavia.³⁷

The right of the state to coerce conscience and forbid free inquiry was still the norm of the day, it seems, in spite of the growing demand for constitutional governments in Scandinavia which guaranteed some civil liberties. Thus the Conventicle Placard of 1741, which declared all religious assemblies held outside the authority of the Lutheran Church of Scandinavia to be illegal, was still enforced, it seems, in spite of the fact that it had been abolished by law in 1842.

Just before Matteson’s departure for Denmark he published in *Advent Tidende* a letter by C. C. Back of Alstrup, Vendsyssel, Denmark, who wrote that he was very

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

grateful for the monthly journal and looked forward to getting it every month. He thought it “contained everything necessary and interesting for a Christian.” At that time, articles by J. N. Andrews, Uriah Smith, J. H. Waggoner, Dudley M. Canright, and James and Ellen G. White about the sanctuary service, the book of Daniel, the law, the second coming, the mortality of the soul, besides practical Christianity and salvation in Christ had been published in *Advent Tidende*. Back said that “the fruit of this seed is that the Lord’s Sabbath is already known and believed in several places in Denmark. Some are therefore not just listeners of the word, but also its doers.”³⁸

Thus both literature and people had prepared the way for Matteson’s arrival.

Matteson’s Arrival in Denmark

Vejle, Denmark, and Beyond

Having arrived June 6, 1877, in Vejle, Denmark, Matteson stayed there “for a short time and visited a few brethren.” Only two weeks after his arrival, he published a hymnbook dated June 20, and published by Hertz’s Printing House in Vejle, entitled *Bibelske Salmer og Lovsanger til Aandelig Opbyggelse* (Biblical Hymns and Songs of Praise for Spiritual Edification). It is only fair to assume he had done some preparatory work for the hymnbook before arriving in Denmark. Matteson’s earlier hymnbook of 1868 and 1870, *Bibelens Salmer og Lovsanger* (Bible Hymns and Songs of Praise), had long since been sold out. This new hymnbook of sixty-four pages contained a collection

³⁸AT, March 1877, 92.

of seventy-one hymns accompanied with “beautiful melodies which proved to be of great help at the meetings.”³⁹

One of the first things Matteson did after arriving in Vejle was to visit N. S. Melkjær who lived “six miles out in the country.” Word spread quickly of Matteson’s arrival “and thirty people attended the evening cottage meetings,” but “positive results seemed few.” In addition there were several groups of six or seven Sabbath-keepers in the vicinity of Vejle whom he visited and preached to both on Sabbaths and Sundays. He also preached in the Methodist Chapel in Vejle to a few hundred people.⁴⁰ Thus he started preaching and publishing almost from the very moment he arrived in Denmark.⁴¹

The publication for the Danish Baptist Church, *Den danske evangelist* (The Danish evangelist), attacked Matteson in its October number in 1877, reporting his arrival in Denmark and that in Vendsyssel he had commenced work for the Adventists. The paper warned its readers that Matteson claimed Saturday was the Christian Sabbath, that Christ’s coming was close, when the real time for his coming had been in 1844, that the soul is not conscious after death, that the ungodly are to be destroyed completely and put out of existence, and many other things which they considered to be novelties from the standpoint of traditional Christianity. The article concluded by saying that Matteson had already gathered large crowds at these meetings.

Matteson was disappointed that his own former brothers should attack him in such a way. He responded that he was not bringing any “new gospel,” and informed them that

³⁹Kaj Pedersen, *Syvende Dags Adventistkirken i Danmark* (The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Denmark) (Næum, DK: Dansk Bogforlag, 2009), 19.

⁴⁰*GV*, 73.

⁴¹*ML*, 186.

the Adventists understood that Jesus Christ, as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, had in 1844 commenced his final purification of man. Then he encouraged them not to be overbearing, but to talk well of one another so that people may be converted and saved to the glory of God.⁴²

Soon Matteson got a letter inviting him to come to Alstrup, “a little town in Northern Jutland.” Matteson described the author of the letter as an “intelligent man who was very interested in the truth,” but “he was poor and deaf” and therefore thought he could not be of much assistance “for the advancement of the cause.”⁴³ Alstrup, however, became the center for Matteson’s evangelism of the surrounding towns and villages in Northern Jutland. The interest in Matteson’s preaching became so great that people “left their work in the fields in the evenings to be able to attend the meetings at night” during the week.⁴⁴ These meetings were held in private homes except on Sundays, when they were held “in the barns because they were still empty.” This must therefore have taken place either in late summer or early autumn of 1877. Matteson said that few went to the “public divine service in the church,” but that “between one and two hundred people came to the meetings in the barns.” And when they came together in the cottages, people were standing “in the sitting room, kitchen, and hall and crowded around the windows out-doors, and come [to the meetings], rain or shine.”⁴⁵ Matteson preferred the barns as a meeting place, because all could “get plenty of fresh air, which was a great relief.” One

⁴²*AT*, February 1878, 57.

⁴³*ML*, 186.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 187.

afternoon when “about two hundred assembled,” half of them “promised to serve the Lord as well as they understood.”⁴⁶

“On Sunday August 12, more than five hundred assembled to hear Elder Matteson preach in a large barn at Saltum.” Among them were three schoolteachers and a Lutheran pastor, whom Matteson called a priest, in the local usage.⁴⁷ As time went on, one of the three local schoolteachers wanted to stop the exceptionally successful preaching of Matteson. Matteson therefore asked the local priest to arrange a public meeting one Sunday afternoon in a barn where he could ask Matteson different questions concerning his faith and doctrines at which time Matteson also could have his turn to ask questions and possibly answer some more questions. The questions the priest was most interested in were “the law, Sabbath, baptism and the immortality of the soul.”⁴⁸ Matteson reported that the barn was full of people and the Lutheran pastor had problems especially with the Sabbath question, since “the Lutherans teach that all of God’s Ten Commandments are binding for all peoples forever,”⁴⁹ according to their own catechism.

When Matteson had answered all the questions the priest asked, it was Matteson’s turn to ask questions. So Matteson asked the priest: “Are the Ten Commandments a law that man has the authority to change?” The priest admitted that “according to our

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷The word “priest” is a literal translation of the Danish word *præst* or the Norwegian word *prest*, etymologically “elder,” from *presbyteros*, *presbyter*. In Denmark and Norway the word describes a Lutheran clergyman ranking next below a bishop and authorized to administer the sacraments. The Lutheran state church in these countries only uses the word “pastor” for their ministers as a title corresponding to the English “the Reverend Mr. Jones.”

⁴⁸GV, 71.

⁴⁹ML, 187.

catechism, it cannot be changed.”⁵⁰ According to Matteson the priest also had problems with answering questions concerning the immortality of the soul.⁵¹

When the question and answer period was over, Matteson used the opportunity to preach to the audience “about true Christianity, Jesus’ compassionate love and his willingness to save souls.”⁵² According to Matteson, even the Lutheran priest was so moved by his message that people could see tears flow freely down his cheek. The priest at the end of Matteson’s preaching said in the hearing of all: “We may not agree on all these things that are so hard to understand, but I believe you love Jesus, and I wish I loved him as you do.”⁵³

In spite of this good and moving reception of Matteson’s preaching, Matteson reported that the people were “very slow to advance on the road of obedience.” They did not get tired of attending the meetings and were willing to assist with the expenses of the meetings, “but to obey all of the Lord’s ordinances was something quite new and strange to them.” They did not know much about fearing the Lord and “it took them a long time to make up their minds. “But,” said Matteson, “some began to keep the Sabbath, and we had meetings on that day on a regular basis.”

Just when things seemed to be going well, the newspaper *Aalborg Stiftstidende*, in October 1877, attacked Matteson as a “delegate from the Adventist Church.” He was identified as Mathiassen from Langeland, Denmark, who had become Matteson after

⁵⁰GV, 71.

⁵¹ML, 188.

⁵²Ibid., 187.

⁵³GV, 72.

moving to the United States twenty years ago. He was viewed as an enthusiastic and talented man with unusual intelligence and was “trained both to champion his teachings and win adherents.” The newspaper maintained that Matteson’s preaching on baptism, observance of the seventh day according to the laws of Moses as a day of worship, not eating pig, since it was unclean, and stating with mathematical precision the second coming of Christ had confused many during two months and awakened “a tremendous religious commotion,” especially in Alstrup and Saltum.⁵⁴

Matteson’s response in *Aalborg Stiftstidende* may be that of a man constantly feeling under attack, hence his quick justification of his actions, even granting some concessions. He claimed not to be a heretic nor a fanatic, but “a missionary from Seventh-day Adventists in America” teaching what the Bible teaches. He said that he preached the death of Christ, his resurrection, his ascension, and his “holy return.” He claimed never to have taught that man could not eat flesh, since all things were permissible, but “not useful” according to the apostle Paul. He emphasized that no one knew the day or the hour of Christ’s return, hence he did not teach such a doctrine. He maintained that the Adventists kept the Sabbath because of the Ten Commandments of God and not according to Moses. He also said that Adventists do not reject infant baptism, but do not believe that infants should be baptized. Matteson reported that while “building an meeting house in Alstrup,” he was also preaching “every night” on the “prophecies and the coming of the Lord.”⁵⁵

⁵⁴*Aalborg Stiftstidende* (Aalborg County tidings), October 1877, no. 232; quoted in *Advent Tidende*, February 1878, 56, 57.

⁵⁵*AT*, February 1878, 56, 57.

As Matteson was preaching and selling books on the island of Fanø in late autumn and early winter of 1877, he was interrupted and threatened by the chief of police for selling books and for accepting donations at the close of his meetings.⁵⁶ According to the Danish chief of police's understanding of the law, Matteson had no right to either sell books or accept donations, since he no longer was a Danish citizen. When, however, the chief of police kept on hindering Matteson's preaching and selling books, Matteson made him aware of the fact that there was now religious liberty in Denmark and that the law protected all religious bodies. When Matteson asked the chief of police whether he was a believer himself, he responded by cursing and declaring the Lutheran faith to be "nothing but nonsense."⁵⁷ But said the chief of police: "I am a royal chief of police and I have sworn by an oath to protect the state religion, so that is why I want to hinder your work as much as I can."⁵⁸

On November 26, 1878, Matteson wrote to the *Review*: "I have been on this island for four weeks. The opposition has been very strong. The priest preaches against us and calls us heretics and fanatics. . . . This excites the people against us, and grown people hoot and jeer at us on the streets, and even when they go home from church. . . . We have commenced a Bible class with sixteen members. We have also started a Sabbath school and prayer meeting."⁵⁹ Yet only "a few accepted the truth" on the island of Fanø.⁶⁰

⁵⁶*ML*, 196; *GV*, 72-74.

⁵⁷*ML*, 200.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹Quoted in *GV*, 74.

⁶⁰*ML*, 201.

As Matteson got to know his own people better he discovered among other things that they dined five times a day and drank liquor or beer with every meal. After much argumentation and persuasion Matteson succeeded in establishing a temperance society. This little beginning, thanks to “others,” said Matteson, grew within a few years so that “thousands of people in Denmark signed their names to the oath of total abstinence.”

Then there was “a man who offered to build a house for us,” said Matteson. He suggested that “we could rent the house for five years,” and then “we could buy it if we wanted to.” The rent for the house was to be paid in advance. Money was donated right away for the rent. The house was built and turned into a good meeting house with a special room for the Mattesons. People also brought bread and milk and other necessities to sustain their housekeeping.⁶¹

The newspaper *Nordjyllands Folkeblad* of December 21, 1877, opined that Matteson had made a great success and that many had gladly listened to his message. With financial support from people in Alstrup, Salum, Vester Hjermitstlev Parish, and Thise Parish, Matteson had erected a meeting house in Alstrup, close to Skjellet, between Alstrup and Saltum Parish. Dubbed the “Cathedral in Alstrup,” it could seat 600. Three hundred were present at the dedication on Sunday, December 16. The administrative committee, with Matteson as the chair, included the following members: Farmer B. Nørgaard of Stavad in Thise Parish, farmer Lars Chr. Diget in Vester Hjermitstlev Parish, farmer Peder Chr. Nørgaard in Alstrup, farmer Jørgen B. A. Nørgaard of Saltumtorp, farmer Peder Nielsen Nøregaard of Nørresaltum, and the local county councilor Chr. Pedersen Havgaard of Østrup in Saltum Parish. They were all well-to-do farmers and

⁶¹*ML*, 188.

called Adventists in the article.⁶² Somehow this apparent success was not satisfactory to Matteson.

In the late winter and early spring of 1878 Matteson held evangelistic meetings at the request of a subscriber of *Advent Tidende*, Nevil Clausen, in Tylstrup.⁶³ Tylstrup was only “three miles as the crow flies, and twice that by the road” from Alstrup.⁶⁴ In spite of the fact that the villagers were entranced with “drinking, card playing and low worldly pleasure, and though it looked in vain to convert them,” because of their limited education, Matteson was surprised “at the great interest” in the message right from the beginning. Matteson said that his word made such a “great impression that he could not but believe that the Lord had a work” for him to accomplish there.⁶⁵ After a certain “big man from Viborg threatened to kill” Matteson, Clausen had made sure that “someone from the police force” was at the meeting every night.⁶⁶

The local Lutheran priest at Tylstrup became so angry at Matteson that he encouraged his parishioners to “break the legs”⁶⁷ of Matteson, so he would stop running around preaching. This made the people believe that Matteson had no right to preach there, so they decided to deport him by force. However, one Sabbath morning when

⁶² *Nordjyllands Folkeblad* (North Jutland People’s Paper) of December 21, 1877 no. 298. *Højskolebladet, Tidende for Folkelig Oplysning* (The High School Paper, News for Popular Information) of January 4, 1878, 12, 13 reported that the assembly hall with the “pretentious” name, “the Cathedral in Alstrup,” had a seating capacity of 600.

⁶³ *ML*, 190.

⁶⁴ *GV*, 74.

⁶⁵ *ML*, 190, 191.

⁶⁶ *GV*, 74, 75.

⁶⁷ *ML*, 191.

Matteson was preaching, a nearby house caught fire. Immediately the neighbors demanded that all farmers present at the meeting should come to help quench the fire. And so they did. That same Sabbath day when Matteson was ready to baptize a number of people in the afternoon, the villagers came with “Gunnar, a tough ex-soldier” to carry Matteson away.⁶⁸ When Matteson’s friends saw the crowd of fifty men and women approaching the house they determined to hide Matteson. In spite of a thorough search, the villagers could not find Matteson and later that Sabbath Matteson baptized his candidates as planned.⁶⁹

Marinus Harlund (1878-1957) whom Matteson baptized as a very young man, explains why those who came looking for Matteson in the house to deport him could not find him. Marinus had just been born at that time and was asleep in his cradle, which his mother had placed over the trapdoor leading to the larder in the basement where Matteson was hiding. Mother told those who came looking for Matteson that they could look anywhere in the house, but they must not awaken her sleeping baby boy. So they did and found nothing.⁷⁰ Thus a number of people were converted to the SDA faith, in spite of great and alarming difficulties. Some left their faith after a short while, while others stayed strong and became “an honor for the cause and help for the mission.”⁷¹

During the Easter season the same year, Matteson planned to hold meetings both in the forenoon and afternoon. Before the time came for the meetings he learned that a

⁶⁸GV, 75.

⁶⁹ML, 191, 192.

⁷⁰Hans Jørgen Schantz, *Ellen G. White i Danmark* (Odense, DK: Dansk Bogforlag, 1987), 29, 30.

⁷¹ML, 191.

mob was coming to break the windows of the meeting house and interrupt the services. Matteson then requested the protection of the police. The police came and told the mob that “Mr. Matteson had the right to preach and would be protected by them.”⁷² Besides preaching Jesus Christ as man’s only hope for salvation, Matteson presented always the present truth concerning “God’s law and his holy Sabbath” and “the Three Angels’ Messages and the prophecies.”⁷³

At Alstrup on April 27 or May 4, 1878, Matteson organized the first Seventh-day Adventist church in Scandinavia. One of those Sabbaths was Matteson’s last in Alstrup, because by May 9, he had already moved to begin new work in the area of Ordrup, Sjælland, Fyn, and Ringsted.⁷⁴

Hardly a week had passed after Matteson had arrived at Ordrup when he received a letter from Battle Creek, Michigan, informing them that their firstborn Matilda had died. Needless to say, this was a very heart-rending and painful experience for the

⁷²*ML*, 193.

⁷³*AT*, September 1877, 282.

⁷⁴*GV*, 76, 77; *ML*, 202. Chilson, in *GV* 76, 77, places the organization on April 27, with 12 members. The *SDA Encyclopedia* has the event taking place in May with 27 members. *SDAE*, 1995 ed., s.v. “Denmark.” Without an extant primary source, it is impossible to verify which of the secondary sources is most accurate. However, the organization must have taken place not later than Sabbath, May 4, 1878, because by May 9, Matteson had moved on through Ordrup and Sjælland to Ringsted, where they rented a room. *ML*, 202. The latest (2007) book on Adventist history in Denmark, Kaj Pedersen’s *Syvende Dags Adventistkirken i Danmark*, agrees with *SDAE*, but does not cite any source. If the church was organized April 27 with 12 members, and added 15 more on May 4, both sources could be credible.

Mattesons being so far away and not knowing anything about their daughter's malaria fever until after her death.⁷⁵

Matteson wrote to James White: "Our dearest child is dead. The next one [Tina] was dangerously sick and not able to write when we last heard from them. Our children cannot stand the Michigan climate." Matteson continued: "I have never in my labor left my field of interest on account of my family, though they have sometimes suffered. But I think the cause of present truth is more than parents, or children, or any earthly interest. I shall also . . . remain, though I am weak and somewhat failing in strength on account of so many important things pressing unusually hard on my mind at present."⁷⁶

In spite of the terrible news, Matteson organized a church at Ringsted a little later. Here he also met an old Baptist who had kept the Sabbath for some time. He was employed by road work all the year round, which made it very hard for him to keep the Sabbath. His continual asking of the authorities for permission not to work on the Sabbath got him on the wrong side of the authorities, but in the end they respected his wishes. Sometimes this man, between seventy and eighty years old, walked eight miles to attend meetings on the Sabbath.⁷⁷

In spite of severe opposition at times, Matteson's work was becoming too large for only one worker. On February 14, 1878, therefore, he appealed for "at least one brother at work who could come in the spring to help us, so that we could begin a missionary work in Norway in the summer, if it is the will of God and the desire of the

⁷⁵*GV*, 75.

⁷⁶Quoted from *GV*, 77, 78.

⁷⁷*ML*, 202, 203.

brothers.”⁷⁸ In April the same year, Ole A. Olsen of Oakland, Wisconsin, responded on behalf of the Adventist General Conference as follows:

May the blessings of the Lord be with Bro. Matteson and his mission in Denmark. It is now less than a year since he arrived there with his wife, and there are already many who have accepted the truth with gladness. The interest is so great that it is necessary to send him an assistant. Bro. Matteson writes that the work is four times more than he can accomplish. . . . At the last General Conference session the following was resolved: ‘Since the Lord has richly blessed the mission in Denmark, and it has grown in size and importance, therefore – Resolved that we show our willingness to help Bro. Matteson and our interest for his work by providing him with all the help we can, and by sending him an assistant as soon as this step can be taken.’⁷⁹

As a result of the resolution of the General Conference, the Danish-born brothers Knud and Andrew Brorson left America sometime during the summer of 1878 to assist Matteson with his mission in Denmark.⁸⁰

At this time Matteson was planning a visit to Norway to follow up regular correspondence with subscribers of *Advent Tidende* in Norway that had begun at least as early as the autumn of 1877. He had already mailed them all the Adventist literature then available in the Danish-Norwegian language. To show other Adventists that “the truth is also finding entrance in Norway,” Matteson cited the letters he received from Norway.⁸¹ For example, he mentioned a friend in Christiania who was the main agent for a leading steamship company and was trading in fish. This correspondent had already accepted much of the Adventist message and had urged Matteson to come and preach it in

⁷⁸*AT*, April 1878, 118.

⁷⁹*AT*, April 1878, 124.

⁸⁰*ML*, 202; *GV*, 79, 80.

⁸¹*AT*, April 1878, 118.

Christiania.⁸² To James White, Matteson reported that “in Norway we have friends in Christiania, Tromsø, Stavanger, Bergen and other places. In Bergen, four brothers and a sister keep the Sabbath. They are anxiously waiting for a series of meetings.” Another letter reported three more Sabbath-keepers in Norway. By early August Matteson thought that it was time to hold tent meetings in the larger towns in Norway, where people were longing to see and hear. But before leaving Denmark, Matteson returned “to Alstrup to pick up loose ends.” He also “organized churches at Uhe and Nortvig.”⁸³

Fact-Finding Tour to Norway

On Monday August 19, 1878, Matteson left Denmark on a steamer “from Fredrikshavn for a fact-finding Norway tour,” Matteson’s first trip to Norway since he came from America. His friend Oluf Svenson, the steamship agent, met Matteson at the docks in Christiania (now Oslo). Ingemar Lindén would later characterize Svenson as “the steamship missionary” because he used to distribute Adventist literature among the emigrants at the docks.⁸⁴ Svenson not only gave Matteson a cordial welcome, but allowed Matteson to use Svenson’s offices as much as he needed. During this first week, with Svenson’s help, Matteson rented the top floor of a three-story building at Osterhausgaden 12, Christiania. The third floor consisted of an entrance hall, seven rooms, kitchen, dining

⁸²AT, May 1878, 155. This friend of Matteson turned out to be agent Oluf Svenson as will be seen below.

⁸³John G. Matteson, Letter to James White, July 1, 1878, Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, MD. RH, September 5, 1878, 85. GV, 78.

⁸⁴GV, 78. Ingemar Linden, *Biblicism Apokalyptic Utopi: Adventismens Historisk Utforming i USA samt dess Svenska Utveckling Till o. 1938* (Biblicism’s Apocalyptic Utopia: Adventism’s Historic Formation in USA and its Swedish Development until 1938) (Uppsala: Universitetet i Uppsala, 1971), 206.

room, closet, corridor, and a rest room. Matteson rented all the section of the third floor that faced the street. One of the rooms was a large parlor connected by folding doors with three other rooms; by opening the folding doors the rooms could be combined into a large hall seating about 500 people.⁸⁵

The rooms had been newly painted, Matteson thought they were “beautiful,” and he rented the floor for a year from the owner Hans B. Larsen, who was the organist of the Grønland Church in Christiania. Matteson reported: “The deal was finalized and we moved in October 1.”⁸⁶

At this point Matteson was already “convinced that it was his duty to put all his strength” into establishing a mission center in Christiania.”⁸⁷ He “observed everywhere a deeper religious life in Norway than in Denmark.”⁸⁸ His plan was to stay in Norway for a couple of weeks and then return to Denmark and help the Brorson brothers, Andrew and Knud, who had recently come from America, to take over the work there. Matteson would then move to Christiania and stay there for a year. His first impression of

⁸⁵*ML*, 208, 294; *GV*, 78. Osterhausgaden is a street in Christiania.

⁸⁶*GV*, 78. *ML*, 208, 291, 294. When Matteson says they “moved in October 1,” he may not mean that he and his wife moved in on that date permanently, because he would yet return to Denmark and bid farewell to his friends there. The context suggests that since the deal was finalized before that date, the contract would take effect as of October 1. Matteson may have underestimated the length of time it would take for him to complete the transition from Denmark to Norway. There is therefore no discrepancy between the date of the lease, beginning October 1, 1878, and the date of Matteson’s actual return to Christiania on October 15, the same year, to commence his mission in Norway.

⁸⁷*ML*, 208.

⁸⁸Lewis Harrison Christian, *Sons of the North* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1942), 144, 145,

Christiania was very positive. “It is a healthy and clean city, here is good opportunity to have writings and journals printed. This is kind of a center for the three Scandinavian countries,” Denmark, Sweden, and Norway.⁸⁹

On Friday, August 23, Matteson visited Henrik C. Rolf at Eidsvold, whom Matteson described as a “Christian brother, who was very interested in the truth.” Rolf was “an engineer on a steamship” who had translated tracts about the Sabbath and printed 10,000 copies of them. Matteson said that he had got them from “our S.D. Baptist brothers.” Matteson continued by saying that Rolf “often preached the word of God on Sundays, and some should have been awakened. I preached at a meeting in his home. People were friendly and asked me to come back.” On Sunday, August 25, Matteson continued his journey to Romedal where he stayed for a day with a brother who was a Sabbath-keeper and a “homeopathic doctor.”⁹⁰

The day after his visit to Romedal, Matteson continued his journey to Trondhjem, where he witnessed a Baptist baptism. From Trondhjem he traveled to Bergen, Haugesund, and Stavanger. He describes the night voyage to Bergen and wondered how the pilot could find his way between the small islands and rocks and skerries.⁹¹

⁸⁹*RH*, September 26, 1878, 109; *AT*, October 1878, 312.

⁹⁰*RH*, September 26, 1878, 109; *AT*, April 1878, 118. *AT*, October 1878, 312.

⁹¹*RH*, October 17, 1878, 126; *AT*, November 1878, 344; *ML*, 209. Presumably his published reports from the time he traveled give his route more accurately than he remembered it twelve years later. His autobiography has him going from Trondhjem to Haugesund, then to Bergen and Stavanger.

In Bergen, Matteson visited local Sabbath-keepers and preached “at a few meetings.”⁹² In Haugesund, he met “a brother who kept the Sabbath” and held “a couple of meetings in his house.”⁹³

In Stavanger, Matteson stayed in the home of a friend who had earlier lived in Chicago. Matteson’s friend attended the local Methodist meetings and on Sunday, September 8, Matteson was allowed to preach twice in the Assembly House of the Methodists. About three hundred people attended each meeting.⁹⁴ These were Matteson’s first public meetings in Norway.⁹⁵ This Sunday was an exceptionally busy day for Matteson. At seven o’clock in the morning at Bethania Chapel, he heard the Lutheran priest Lars Oftedal preach to a congregation of 700 to 800 people.⁹⁶ At nine o’clock he was with the Methodists. At three in the afternoon he was with the Quakers. At four he was in the St. Petri church listening to Welhaven.⁹⁷ At five in the afternoon Matteson was with the Methodists again. In the evening Matteson preached in the Temperance House,⁹⁸ on “The Two Covenants.” That meeting had been advertised in two

⁹²*RH*, September 26, 1878, 109; *ML*, 210.

⁹³*ML*, 209.

⁹⁴*Stavangeren* (The Stavanger), September 7, 1878, 1; *Stavanger Amtstidende og Adresseavis* (Stavanger County Tidings and Address news), September 7, 1878, 1.

⁹⁵*AT*, November 1878, 344.

⁹⁶*ML*, 210.

⁹⁷This cannot be the famous Norwegian poet Johan Sebastian Welhaven since he died in 1873; hence this Welhaven is unidentifiable.

⁹⁸*ML*, 210, 211; *RH*, November 1878, 344. The first temperance society in Norway was organized in Stavanger by Asbjørn Kloster December 29, 1859 and called Stavanger yngre avholdenhedsforening (Stavanger younger temperance society).

of the city's largest newspapers, where Matteson introduced himself as a "missionary from America."⁹⁹

Matteson had to stay in Stavanger until Tuesday night, because there was no steamship leaving until then. On Monday, therefore, he spoke on temperance to fifty children in the Assembly Hall of the Quakers. That same night he participated in a Methodist gathering. He said that "these brethren received me in a friendly manner, and my short stay with them was very edifying."¹⁰⁰ That day Matteson announced in the news paper *Stavangeren* that he would deliver a public lecture the next day in the Temperance House at eight o'clock. After less than a month in Norway, Matteson boarded a steamship in Stavanger Tuesday night, September 9, 1878, to go via Kristiansand and Larvik to Fredrikshavn and from there to Copenhagen, Denmark.¹⁰¹

Back in Denmark and Farewell

Back in Northern Jutland, Matteson reached Alstrup by September 17, 1878. He worked in Alstrup and other places for a while before handing over the work in Denmark to Knud and Andrew Brorson, who had just come from America at Matteson's request, as already mentioned. Natives of this part of Denmark, the Brorson brothers had worked here earlier as wool merchants, before moving to America where they lived from 1868 to 1878. Knud Brorson had studied at the SDA Battle Creek College and worked for the Adventist Church in America. In March 1878 the General Conference of Adventists

⁹⁹*Stavangeren* (The Stavanger), September 7, 1878, 1; *Stavanger Amtstidende og Adresseavis* (Stavanger County Tidings and Address news), September 7, 1878, 1.

¹⁰⁰*ML*, 210, 211; *AT*, November 1878, 344.

¹⁰¹*Stavangeren*(The Stavanger), September 9, 1878, 1; *ML*, 211.

resolved to send these brothers to Denmark. A note in the *Advent Tidende* of August 1878 stated: “The brothers Andrew and Knud Brorson will journey, the Lord willing, one of these days to Denmark to help Brother Matteson in the Danish-Norwegian mission.”¹⁰² Matteson thought highly of them and was thankful for the many visits they paid to private homes, and their presence at the gatherings of the believers. Matteson was therefore both grateful and pleased to be able to leave the work in Denmark in the able hands of the Brorson brothers. Some lay members assisted them as well, including Kristian Jørgensen, Christian Christensen in Vendsyssel, J. P. Hansen on Sjælland, and C. C. Hansen, who established the first SDA church school in Europe and for a while led the colporteur ministry. Sine Renlev joined the SDA Church in 1879 and became the first woman evangelist of the church in Denmark. Together with Knud Brorson, she became a leading pioneer of the SDA Church there.¹⁰³

On September 30, 1878, Matteson wrote: “Today I am traveling to Vejle.” A week later he wrote: “From Sjælland we traveled to Ueh and held three meetings with the Brethren. . . . Late at night I arrived at Alstrup. Here on the Sabbath [October 4] we had three meetings and celebrated the Lord’s Supper. Early next morning I was on my way to Høllum. Here we had three meetings.” A week later Matteson wrote: We had a temperance meeting in Alstrup last week. . . . Sabbath afternoon [October 11] the house of assembly in Alstrup was filled with a large audience. This was our farewell meeting

¹⁰²*AT*, August, 1878. The Brorson brothers were descendants of Hans Adolph Brorson (1694-1764) who was a bishop of Ribe, Denmark, and a hymn writer.

¹⁰³*ML*, 202; *GV*, 79, 80. L. Muderspach, 1877-1937, “Kort tilbageblik over Adventbudskabets Opkomst herhjemme” (Short Retrospective Glance concerning the Advent Message’s Beginning here at home); *Missionsefterretninger* [*Mission News*],

[to Alstrup].” He also held a meeting in Fredrikshavn on Sunday, October 12, 1878, the day the Mattesons left Denmark for Norway.¹⁰⁴

The reason for Matteson’s early departure from Denmark may have been the fact that he did not experience the degree of success he had hoped for. He had anticipated “exciting results” because of 260 *Advent Tidende* “subscribers in Denmark.”¹⁰⁵ He seems not to have seen any possibility for further religious revival anywhere in Denmark. He compared his meager yields with the work of the Methodists there. He said that they had worked hard in Denmark for many years, but he thought that their achievements had not been proportionate to their hard work. Therefore, Matteson came to focus his attention more and more on Norway, where he felt that there was “deeper religious life” than in Denmark and because of the “many sincere requests [which] came from there.”¹⁰⁶

The well-known American church historian Kenneth Scott Latourette summed up the situation in Denmark at the time of Matteson’s stay there by saying that “Christianity did not have its full sway in Denmark. Here, as elsewhere, skepticism and secularism were at work.” Latourette cited the eminent Danish critic and literary historian Georg Morris Cohen Brandes (1842-1927) as a “symbol and a furtherer of a non-Christian naturalism,” known as the Enlightenment. Brandes, he said, “was a radical whose extensive and influential writings were contrary to the religious strains which had been

extra number, June 1937, 2, 3. Kaj Pedersen, *Syvende Dags Adventistkirken i Danmark*, 23-25.

¹⁰⁴*AT*, December 1878, 345, 376; *RH*, November 14, 1878, 157.

¹⁰⁵*GV*, 76. Chilson also pointed out that only “sixty subscriptions” of *Advent Tidende* “were being sent to Norway, but many sincere requests came from there.”

¹⁰⁶*AT*, no. 42 (1877), 375; *GV*, 76; Christian, *Sons of the North*, 144, 145.

dominant in Danish life.”¹⁰⁷ Matteson’s own observation of the comparative religious interest in Denmark and Norway, agrees with Latourette’s. Matteson thought there was “ten times more religious interest in this country [Norway] than Denmark.”¹⁰⁸ Further, he “observed everywhere a deeper religious life in Norway than in Denmark.”¹⁰⁹ The reason for this difference may largely be, as already briefly indicated above, because of the intellectual, scientific, and cultural life of the Enlightenment in which reason was advocated as the primary source and legitimacy for authority, and as a set of ideas and values whose core was a critical questioning of traditional religious institutions, customs, and morals, supposedly based on the Bible, and so eloquently advocated by Georg Morris Cohen Brandes in Denmark. The Enlightenment in Denmark introduced skepticism and secularism even among the clergy, who strongly opposed any introduction of biblical messages, especially if they disagreed with established creeds.

Historian Peter Gay asserted that the Enlightenment had broken through the sacred circle of ecclesiastical thought whose dogma had circumscribed thinking, especially in France. Said Gay, “Voltaire came out into the open with his campaign to *écraser l'infame*” i.e., to crush the infamous thing, or Christianity.” The Enlightenment philosophers viewed Christianity as a disease, a “sacred contagion” or a “sick man’s

¹⁰⁷Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, vol. 2 (New York: Harper and Row publishers, 1975), 1143.

¹⁰⁸Quoted in *GV*, 82.

¹⁰⁹Lewis Harrison Christian, *Sons of the North* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1942), 144, 145.

dream.” Their goal was therefore “the conquest of revealed religion.”¹¹⁰ Brandes thought that all religious dogmas came from the same source, hence he fought any Christian influence.

The very opposite influence had taken place in Norway some years before the arrival of Brandes on the scene. There is no doubt about the profound influence of Hans Nielsen Hauge on both secular and religious history in Norway.¹¹¹ His informal network of lay-preachers and the nationwide distribution of his many books throughout Norway challenged the establishment of the state church in many ways and in particular rationalism and secularism both within and without the church. Hauge’s message was a renaissance of the Christian spirituality which he thought originated with Martin Luther and had nothing in common with the Enlightenment.¹¹²

Matteson also thought that alcoholism was far too widespread in Denmark because there were no temperance societies to educate the people, let alone support from the government. He had therefore begun the first temperance society in Denmark in 1877. Matteson knew that both the Norwegian and Swedish governments supported the temperance movements. That may also have been a contributing factor to Matteson’s interest in establishing his headquarters in Christiania, Norway.¹¹³ The fact that Matteson had become a citizen of the United States of America and was therefore viewed as a

¹¹⁰Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation. The Science of Freedom* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), 16, 83. See also Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation. The Rise of Modern Paganism*, 130-132. Voltaire was the pen name of François-Marie Arouet (1694–1778), a leading French Enlightenment writer and philosopher.

¹¹²See chapter 1.

¹¹³Kaj Pedersen, *Syvende Dags Adventistkirken i Danmark*, 20.

foreign representative of new and strange doctrines, caused some in his native land to regard him with “unequaled prejudice” and to feel that they needed to prove his message was not true. Some may even have taken offense at him like they did at his Lord Jesus who said: “A prophet is not without honor except in his home town, and in his *own* household.”¹¹⁴

The call from Bergen by a reader there serves well to sum up why Matteson’s mind was finally made up to leave for Norway and work there. A reader in Bergen wrote to the *Review and Herald*: “I have begun to think somewhat about the Sabbath question and the prophecies of the second coming of Christ; but, like the eunuch, I need Philip to explain these things to me. . . . Send us as many of your publications as you can spare. I believe the Lord has many honest souls in this city.”¹¹⁵

Matteson’s Arrival in Norway

According to Matteson’s autobiography he arrived in Christiania, Norway, Tuesday, October 15, 1878. In spite of sixty subscribers to *Advent Tidende* in Norway, Matteson said that when he arrived in Christiania “there was not a single soul in the city

¹¹⁴Matthew 13:57 (NAS); *GV*, 91. From May 20 to June 20, 1880, Matteson visited Denmark and preached in many places in Vendsyssel. On May 30, the same year the Danish Conference was organized. It consisted of seven churches (Alstrup, Høllum Tylstru, Dronninglund, Jested, Nortvig, and Uhe) and ninety-one baptized members. This was the first SDA conference to be organized outside the United States. Matteson was elected the president of the conference and thus became the first Adventist conference president outside the United States. See L. Munderspach, 1877-1937, “Kort tilbageblik over Adventbudskabets Opkomst herhjemme,” *Missionsefterretningen* (Missionary Tidings), extra number, June 1937, 3; “Den danske Konferenses 75 års jubilæum 30 maj 1955,” (The Danish Conference’s 75 Years Jubilee May 30, 1955), *Adventnyt* (Advent News), June 1955, 2. See also Kaj Pedersen, *Syvende Dags Adventistkirken i Danmark* 21.

¹¹⁵Quoted in *GV*, 76.

who shared my faith and practice.” “No missionary work had been done before us; no tracts or papers had prepared the way. The greatest prejudice was against our faith.”¹¹⁶

Yet, on December 9, 1879, little over a year later, Matteson wrote:

I have never seen such a religious stir in any place as in this city; and it has all sprung up in a few years. Some preachers who are dissenters have large congregations, and beside them there is a host of lesser lights. The ministers, missionaries and colporteurs in fellowship with the State church are numerous. They have prayer-meetings and Bible-readings, and work most diligently. One of the preachers used a large tent in the summer season. He has thousands of hearers. Many people are awakened, and converted so far as they understand the truth. Prayer-meetings are held and souls are seeking the Lord from one end of the city to the other.¹¹⁷

The Baptist editor of *Evangelisten* (The Evangelist), Zakarias Wesseltoft, who will be introduced in more detail below, had the following to say concerning the religious situation in Christiania, and about Matteson and his mission there:

It cannot be denied that this year, due to the work of many, the number of the awakened ones has increased. But it is characteristic of everybody's work that it pulls in a one-sided direction of conversion and faith, and nobody dares to move much further, and in addition to that, no one has the urge to do so. Then suddenly there appears a man from the other side of the ocean—John G. Matteson from the United States of America, and commences with a number of lectures about the prophetic visions and the last times, partly from Daniel, partly from the Revelation, etc. and with amazing certainty and clarity he points out things which have been fulfilled and that which shall happen, as he at the same time heralds the second coming of the Lord. *The Evangelist* does not feel that it fulfills its purpose by being silent about this activity. For it has been said that many shall run and search the book and by so doing knowledge shall increase in the time of the end. We know that those who have themselves listened to Mr. Matteson would, if they wanted to, know how to evaluate his mission. But we want to draw attention to him, so that as many as possible could hear, truthfully speaking, the most remarkable evidences he presents from the word of God. And we say together with the apostle in his letter, 1 Thessalonians 5:21: “Test everything. Hold on to the good,” and as Paul also said earlier: “Do not treat prophecies with contempt.”

¹¹⁶*ML*, 291. See *HS*, 63. See also *Evangeliets Sendebud* (Gospel messenger), no. 11, 1978, 21; *ML*, 291; *RH*, January 23, 1879, 30.

¹¹⁷*RH*, January 9, 1879, 14.

When one looks at the large crowds of people and considers the workers who walk among them, then it appears that the latter ones by a silent agreement have decided to take care not to pay attention to the prophecies. There must, however, be a reason for the fact that they are presented in the book of the Lord so that they may be both made known, contemplated, and serve humanity as a lighthouse in the darkness of the night. The Christian activity needs this gift of grace, otherwise even the one who wants to stay awake will become tired on his watch and fall asleep. The gifts of exhortation, wisdom, knowledge and prophecy are all necessary, and we should desire that none of the Lord's workers should despise the one who comes in his Lord's name and errand, at least not without being tested first.¹¹⁸

Matteson responded: "It appears that we have come just in time."¹¹⁹

Matteson's Mission Commences in Christiania

Matteson's held his first public meeting in Christiania on Sunday, October 27, 1878, on the subject of "Christ's second coming." The meeting began at five o'clock in the afternoon at Osterhausgaden 12.¹²⁰ Matteson had introduced himself in the newspaper *Morgenposten* as a graduate of Chicago University and a missionary in America for fifteen years.¹²¹

Agent Oluf Svenson received the Mattesons cordially as he had done before and helped them in every way he could. He made his offices available to Matteson and helped them find living quarters, assembly room, and furniture for the assembly hall, and also

¹¹⁸ *Evangelisten* (The Evangelist), December 15, 1878, 375, 376. My English translation of 1 Thess 5:21 follows the NIV.

¹¹⁹ *RH*, January 23, 1870, 30.

¹²⁰ *Morgenposten*, October 24, 1878, 5; October 26, 1878, 5. Osterhausgaden 12 was never the home of Svenson as Lewis Harrison Christian, Sara Elizabeth Carter, and Ariel D. Chilson maintain. Christian is right when he describes the assembly hall and the rooms,¹²⁰ but not so when he said that it was the home of Svenson. See Christian, *Sons of the North*, 145; Carter, *By Jet over Pioneer Footprints* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1967), 192; Chilson, *Trial and Triumph*, 72.

¹²¹ *Morgenposten*, October 24, 1878, 5; October 26, 1878, 5.

helped get some of Matteson's writings published, as will be seen below.¹²² Svenson was a Sunday-keeping Baptist who, because of the Sabbath, never joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church. According to P. Stiansen, "O. Svendsen had really all along acclaimed the Adventist teaching about the soul; [but] he had not kept the Sabbath."¹²³ Yet, he was Matteson's most helpful assistant to begin with.

In preparing for the first meeting, Svenson and Matteson obtained a pulpit and suitable seats for the whole assembly hall. Matteson probably bought thirty benches for the assembly hall, but Svenson provided him with seventeen benches "which he took from us," said Baptist Stiansen.¹²⁴ They illuminated the hall with lamps and placed a little box for donations by the entrance. The small donations placed in that box during the first year paid the rent, electricity, all heating expenses, advertisements, and all the furniture bought for the assembly hall.¹²⁵ Svenson said that there was one small thing they had to do before the very first meeting and that was to shut up the windows with shades. He

¹²²Svenson's surname was originally Svendsen. He may have changed it to Svenson after he moved to the USA where he "among other things volunteered to participate with honor in the Northern States' Army during the Civil War." In 1872, Svenson was the main agent for the North Pacific Train Company in Norway. He was also at the same time an agent for the National-Line Steamship Company in Norway and later for the North-German Lloyds Steamship Company. In 1873 Svenson published a book describing the USA in advantageous and favorable terms. See *AT*, May 1882, 60; *Morgenposten* (Morning Mail), October 24, 1878, 10; *Morgenposten*, July 8 and 15, 1879, 12, 13; O. Svendsen, *Den Nye Nordvesten: En Beskrivelse over Landstrækningen langs Nord Pacific Jernbanen udgivet efter officielle Kilder* (The New North West: A Description of the Stretch of Land along the North Pacific Railroad Published and Based on Official Sources (Christiania: H. J. Jensen, 1873), 1-56, 39.

¹²³P. Stiansen, *Bapristenes historie I Norge*—1st part (History of the Baptists in Norway, first part) (Oslo: Norsk litertursselskaps Forlag, 1935), 169.

¹²⁴Stiansen, 169.

¹²⁵*ML*, 211, 212; *RH*, May 8, 1879, 130.

thought that the neighbors on the other side of the street could watch what was going on inside and that would be very embarrassing if only a few people turned up. Matteson hesitantly agreed. Now everything was ready.¹²⁶

Almost an hour before the meeting began, people started arriving. Within an hour the assembly hall was full and people kept on coming. They had to open the next room and people kept coming. Finally they had to open the third room and that was not enough. The staircases and the entrance hall were also full of people. Quite a number of the people had to stand. As the hall was already overcrowded a number of people had to go back home. Matteson said: "I spoke for an hour. The audience listened with the deepest interest, and nobody seemed to get tired of standing." Matteson estimated that when the three small rooms had been added to the assembly hall, seating and standing capacity reached about 300 people.¹²⁷

A certain man, unknown by name, who later joined the Adventist Church told Matteson that a few prominent people had been present. Two of these were lawyers. The one said to the other: "This man cannot be disproved; the state of his evidence is substantial and too accurate and true to put a spoke in his wheel."¹²⁸ The same reporter noticed that people were somewhat taken by surprise when Matteson stood in front of them ready to preach. Many had expected a tall man with a number of books, but here he was, a man of small stature, and he had nothing but his Bible with him, and no other books!

¹²⁶*ML*, 212.

¹²⁷*ML*, 212; *AT*, December 1878, 376. The next year, January 22, 1879, Matteson wrote in *Tidernes Tegn* that Osterhausgaden 12 could seat 500 people (*ML*, 294).

¹²⁸*ML*, 212, 213.

After the meeting 100 small tracts were handed out and some larger tracts were sold. Matteson immediately realized that he needed more help, even colporteurs. During the following week he could only visit “one tenth”¹²⁹ of those whom he wanted to see. He therefore asked “interested persons to help him visit people and have prayer meetings and Bible studies in the homes around.”¹³⁰ Matteson reported in the *Review and Herald* that he had never commenced a series of meetings where the interest had been so great and he hoped that he with God’s help could continue as successfully as he had begun.¹³¹ The next week Matteson wrote that God had answered prayers. He has “been good towards us and favored our endeavor. Our house has been full of listeners during the week.”¹³²

For the meeting, Sunday, November 10, Matteson had to find a larger hall because of the increasing influx of people who wanted to hear his message. He managed to hire the gymnasium of the Gjertsen School¹³³ which was a private school. The topic that Sunday evening at five was: “Daniel’s Prophecy of the Judgment and the Papacy.” Matteson reported that about 500 people attended the meeting and that this was the first meeting held in the gymnasium. This was also the only meeting Matteson conducted there. He said when referring to the November 10 meeting “The one [assembly hall] I had last week I could not obtain anymore.”¹³⁴ Therefore he had to find a new meeting place

¹²⁹AT, December 1878, 376.

¹³⁰ML, 225.

¹³¹RH, November 28, 1878, 174.

¹³²AT, January 1879, 26.

¹³³*Morgenbladet* (Morning Paper), November 9 and 10, 1878, 18; *Morgenposten* (Morning Post), November 9, 1878, 17.

¹³⁴AT, January 1879, 26.

for the following Sunday, November 17. He succeeded in “obtaining a large assembly hall for the Sunday evening meeting.” According to Matteson’s own advertisement in two newspapers in Christiania, this large assembly hall was “Maribogadens Gymnasium” or the gymnasium of Maribo Street Latin School (*Maribogadens Latin- and Realskole*). Matteson remembered this as “the large hall” because it could seat from 800 to 1,200 people.¹³⁵

The topic November 17 was the Sanctuary and 2300 prophetic days in Dan 8. Matteson estimated that there were about 600 people present. When he presented the Millennium on November 24, about 1,000 people were present.¹³⁶

Twelve years later, Matteson wrote in his autobiography: “After two months I rented the gymnasium of a Latin School where a thousand people came regularly to divine services Sunday nights for three months.”¹³⁷ Here his memory seems to fail him somewhat. He did preach every Sunday night there for three months, but not “two months” after he commenced preaching in Christiania, October 27, but rather three weeks later.¹³⁸ The context in his autobiography suggests that the “after” refers to his first public preaching on October 27, at Oaterhausgaden 12, and his own advertisements in *Morgenbladet* and *Morgenposten* at this time confirm that he preached for the first time

¹³⁵*Morgenbladet*, November 16, and 17, 1878, 21; *Morgenposten*, November 16, 1878, 16; *ML*, 213, 221; *AT*, January 1879, 26.

¹³⁶*AT*, January 1879, 26; *RH*, January 9, 1879, 14 (supplement, p. 2).

¹³⁷*ML*, 213.

¹³⁸*Morgenbladet*, November 16 and 17, 1878, 21; *Morgenposten*, November 16, 1878, 16.

in the gymnasium of Maribogaden Latin-og Realskole¹³⁹ on November 17, at half past seven in the evening. Matteson's lease of the gymnasium expired Saturday, February 15, 1879.¹⁴⁰ On Wednesday, February 5, Matteson said: "Next Sunday is the last time we can have this hall"¹⁴¹ (the gymnasium at Maribogaden). That Sunday would be February 9.

On weekdays, Matteson was with his faithful audience at Osterhausgade 12 where he himself lived on Tuesdays and Thursdays.¹⁴² On Sundays he was in the Large Hall or Maribogaden gymnasium and Sunday school at Osterhausgade 12.¹⁴³ In addition he conducted prayer meetings at Grønland, Kampen, and Grüneløkk.¹⁴⁴

Only about three months after Matteson arrived in Norway he began writing and publishing *Tidernes Tegn*. On January 22, 1879, he said he was having "edifying meetings on the Sabbath at 10 o'clock in the forenoon, and Bible class at 2 in the afternoon." Then he conducted "prayer meeting on Friday at 7 o'clock and Sunday school at 3 o'clock in the afternoon at Osterhausgade 12." This was in addition to his public addresses at Osterhausgade 12 and Maribogaden gymnasium. To the latter place on the average about "1000 to 1200 people" turned out to listen to Matteson's preaching. So

¹³⁹*Maribogaden* (Maribo Street) is a street in Christiania; *Maribogaden Latin-og Realskole* is the name of a secondary and high school in Christiania in the above mentioned street, which, in part, gave the school its name.

¹⁴⁰*RH*, January 13, 1879, supplement, 54.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*, March 6, 1879, 78.

¹⁴²*ML*, 212, 213.

¹⁴³*AT*, January 1879, 26.

¹⁴⁴*Evangeliets Sendebud*, no. 11, 1978, 21.

great was the interest that, despite the winter weather, people even stood outside the lecture hall to listen.¹⁴⁵

On December 1, Matteson held the usual divine service at half past ten in the forenoon at Osterhausgaden 12. However, in the afternoon he did not, as he was used to doing by this time, have his public lecture at Maribogaden gymnasium, but at Folketeatret (the People's Theater) in Møllergaden (Møller Street) at five o'clock in the afternoon. The topic Matteson had chosen was: "America's spiritualism and magnetism (knocking spirits)—also features from twenty-two years of experiences from journeys and stays in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, and Michigan."¹⁴⁶ This time people had to buy tickets at the office of O. Svenson to be allowed to enter. The price of the tickets varied from fifty øre (twenty cents) to twenty øre (eight cents), depending on where in the theater one wanted to sit. About 1,000 people were present.¹⁴⁷ This was the only time Matteson lectured in this theater, because the next Sunday he was back in Maribo Street's gymnasium continuing his preaching until Sunday, February 15, when his three-month contract expired.¹⁴⁸ Matteson's reason for preaching at the People's Theater was to answer attacks by "the whole clergy of the State Church, including the

¹⁴⁵*TT*, January 22, 1879; *ML*, 213, 294.

¹⁴⁶*Aftenposten* (Evening Mail), November 29, 1878, 20; *Morgenbladet*, November 30, 1878, 21.

¹⁴⁷*ML*, 220; for Matteson's statement of currency equivalents, see *RH*, February 13, 1879, 52; quoted on p. 251, below.

¹⁴⁸*ML*, 225.

bishop and professors at the State University” who “had arisen like one man”¹⁴⁹ to crush Matteson’s new doctrines.

A young Methodist pastor, Sakarias A. Isaacson, had also “commenced a most bitter attack” both in the daily paper *Dagen* (The Day), his own church paper, and in a large hall, declaring the teachings of Seventh-day Adventists to be false. When pastor Isaacson was through with his attacks for the time being, some of Matteson’s friends approached him and told him that he had to do something about these serious attacks. Matteson decided then to rent the theater and invite Pastor Isaacson to come. He came, but left during the lecture.

Matteson had tried to persuade the daily *Dagen* to accept articles he wrote to disprove Pastor Isaacson’s allegations. But the editor declined to accept Matteson’s contributions to the debate until O. Svenson, who advertised in the paper, talked with the editor. Then the paper serialized Matteson’s reply through seven or eight issues before it was reprinted as a 32-page tract.¹⁵⁰

The Sabbath First Publicly Introduced

On December 16, Matteson reported that he had not yet presented the Decalogue and the Sabbath, but that he had introduced and explained the mark of the beast and the seal of God when he presented the prophecies of the books of Daniel and the Revelation. Matteson then informed his readers that on the previous Sabbath, December 14, 1878, “we had our first Sabbath meeting.” “Forty-five persons were present and more than

¹⁴⁹*RH*, February 20, 1879, 62.

¹⁵⁰*ML*, 220.

thirty declared that they had decided to keep the Sabbath.” Matteson said that many of these had been Baptists and that the leaders of the Baptist Church fully agreed “with us.”¹⁵¹

In a letter to James White, December 10, 1878, Matteson wrote that “many of those most interested are Swedes. The truth will naturally work out from this city into Sweden as well as into all parts of Norway. There is ten times more religious interest in this country than in Denmark.”¹⁵²

The above-mentioned remarkable testimony by Wesseltoft, the Baptist editor of *Evangelisten* (Evangelist), appeared in his paper the day after Matteson had had his first “Sabbath meeting” where forty-five persons were present and thirty publicly announced that they would keep the Sabbath henceforth. It is therefore very likely that Wesseltoft was one of the “leading Baptists” who decided to do so that day. That will be treated upon more fully later. Matteson also mentioned that opposition on every side, both bitter and absurd, had not caused any decrease in interest; when he had preached on the topic “Signs of the Times” Sunday, December 16, 700 people had been present. He also indicated his plan to start presentations on the subject of “life and death.”¹⁵³

A week later Matteson stated that a Baptist editor of a religious paper had “accepted the truth.” The editor, whose fortnightly periodical had 1,000 subscribers, recommended Matteson’s mission in Christiania, and announced that the coming issues of his own journal would include mainly articles about the prophecies and the second

¹⁵¹Ibid., January 16, 1879, 21.

¹⁵²Quoted in *GV*, 82.

¹⁵³*RH*, January 16, 1879, 21.

coming of Christ.¹⁵⁴ The Baptist brother that Matteson here referred to was Zacharias Zachariassen Wesseltoft, editor of *Evangelisten* (Evangelist).¹⁵⁵ He would play a prominent role in organizing the first Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway and assist in purchasing the first church property.

As Matteson continued lecturing on Sundays in the Maribo Street gymnasium, three Lutheran pastors, Johan C. H. Storjohan, J. Storm Munch, and Fredrik Ring, held their own services on week nights there. These clergymen, who had formerly opposed one another, joined forces for a while to oppose Matteson. In desperation they called a mass meeting, and there decided on a “publishing campaign in defense of Sunday.” Munch declared Matteson to be a heretic and warned the people against him. He tried also to force Matteson to vacate the school he had hired. But suddenly he himself moved to another place. Pastor Ring kept on preaching at Maribogaden School for some time after Matteson ceased preaching there.¹⁵⁶

Matteson’s Biblicism

Throughout his ministry Matteson had emphasized that he as a Christian individual viewed the Bible as the infallible word of God. The Bible he said is the “only rule for the Christian faith,”¹⁵⁷ and “we have no other creed, but the Bible.”¹⁵⁸ God’s

¹⁵⁴*RH*, January 23, 1878, 30.

¹⁵⁵*Evangelisten* (Evangelist), December 15, 1878, 375, 376.

¹⁵⁶*Luthersk Kirketidende* (Lutheran Church tidings), December 8, 1900, 355; *GV*, 82; *Morgenposten*, February 22 and March 8, 1879.

¹⁵⁷*ML*, 215, 291.

word stood above any human tradition and the commandments of the Lord were on a much higher level than any human social and cultural development.¹⁵⁹

Such was Matteson's emphasis on the Bible as the only guide of Christian faith that people in Christiania started buying Bibles as never before. Some of the booksellers were very grateful to Matteson in this respect.¹⁶⁰ Matteson wanted the people to search the Scriptures for themselves so that they might learn to have faith in God, how to pray, and obtain true conversion.¹⁶¹

The love of Christ as revealed in his ministry, death, and resurrection was the core of Matteson's preaching and the theme of his life. He longed for men to understand the justification brought about by the death of Christ and the sanctification wrought in the individual's life by the Holy Spirit. At the same time, Matteson emphasized the individual's freedom of choice to live in accordance with his own conscience.

Matteson spoke often of God's unchangeable law as it is revealed in the Ten Commandments. In this connection Matteson pointed out that "it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail"¹⁶² (Luke 16:17). It is only the fourth one of the ten, he said further, which defines the living God as the Creator of the heavens and the earth and all things that are therein. "That is why," said Matteson, "we keep the

¹⁵⁸*TT*, 9 January 1879; quoted in *ML*, 291, since the earliest issues of *Tidernes Tegn* are no longer extant.

¹⁵⁹*TT*, January 9, 1879, as quoted in *ML*, 292.

¹⁶⁰*ML*, 214.

¹⁶¹*TT*, January 9, 1879, as quoted in *ML*, 292.

¹⁶²*TT*, February 12, 1879, as quoted in *ML*, 295.

seventh or the last day of the week.”¹⁶³ God had not changed the Sabbath, for he never changes. Matteson also emphasized that there was but one immortality awaiting man: “The immortality through Christ, the great Life-giver.” Man thus neither possesses natural immortality, nor does he have an unalienable right to immortality; it can only be transferred to him by Christ through faith in him.¹⁶⁴

In addition to these fundamentals, Matteson preached on the prophecies of the books of Daniel and the Revelation. He also said: “Many think that I treat upon too many things in Scripture, and that I advance too fast. But I know just what I am doing. I have preached for 20 years and for 16 years I have presented all the same points of faith which I now teach. I have a precise purpose with my mission, and I do not hide it, and tell it as it is.” Matteson’s purpose was to gain the people’s confidence, have them search the Scriptures, lead them to Christ as their personal Savior, have them work with the Holy Spirit on a day-by-day conversion, and teach them all there is to be known concerning prophecies connected to Christ and his first and second comings, so that the people could be prepared spiritually, intellectually, and historically to meet their Lord and Savior in the clouds of heaven.¹⁶⁵

Thus Matteson saw his Bible teaching as more advanced than “the one-sided direction”¹⁶⁶ of the preaching of the Christian faith done by other churches at this time in Christiania, according to Wesseltoft in his *Evangelisten*. Wesseltoft was also very happy

¹⁶³*TT*, January 15, 1879, as quoted in *ML*, 293.

¹⁶⁴*ML*, 215, 216.

¹⁶⁵*TT*, January 9, and 15, 1879, as quoted in *ML*, 291-293; *ML*, 211-226.

¹⁶⁶*Evangelisten*, December 15, 1878, 375, 376.

with Matteson's much larger biblical vision, and thanked him for presenting the prophecies of the Bible which he thought "serve humanity as a lighthouse in the darkness of the night."¹⁶⁷ In addition, Matteson selected both his topics and the sequence of his topics very carefully so as not to turn his audience needlessly away and in order "to give the people confidence in our work."¹⁶⁸

Opposition: The Sabbath/Sunday Question

The papers in Christiania called for the pastors of the State Church to come forward and defend their old faith, asking: "Are nearly all the shepherds of the churches in Christiania asleep? . . . After the pure doctrines of the State Church have, through print and public lectures, been clearly proved to be a forgery through and through, as is now done, the priests need to do something else than merely to warn the churches against attending and listening; for the people go by the hundreds anyway." Matteson said that "such strong calls have, of course, awakened the shepherds so that the Sabbath and immortality were discussed" especially.¹⁶⁹

It has been maintained that the reaction to the Sabbath question did not come about because of Matteson's preaching about the Sabbath, because it commenced before he publicly presented the subject of the seventh day as the true and only Sabbath of the Lord. On 16 December, Matteson reported that he had not yet presented the subject of the law and the Sabbath as such, but that he had introduced and explained the mark of the beast and the seal of God when he presented the prophecies in his lectures. Hence he

¹⁶⁷Ibid.

¹⁶⁸*ML*, 215.

¹⁶⁹*RH*, February 27, 1870, 70.

must have said something about Sunday, the mark of the beast, and the Sabbath, the seal of God.

Matteson also informed readers of the *Review* that on the previous Sabbath (December 14,), “we had our first Sabbath meeting.” Forty-five persons were present and more than thirty declared that they had decided to keep the Sabbath. Matteson said that many of these had been Baptists and that the leaders of the Baptist Church fully agreed “with us.”¹⁷⁰

The thirty or more who decided to keep the Sabbath must have been informed about the binding obligations of the fourth commandment concerning Sabbath-keeping prior to their decision. Hence, although Matteson had not presented the Sabbath as such in his public lectures on Sundays so far at Maribogaden gymnasium, he must have said something at Osterhausgaden 12 when he lectured there on Tuesdays and Thursdays and certainly during personal conversations with people of interest. Therefore the Sabbath question must have become part of the public opinion, since Matteson had created “huge excitement in the capital of Norway, and from there to the whole country”¹⁷¹ both about the Sabbath and the immortality question.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰*RH*, January 16, 1879, 21.

¹⁷¹*ML*, 214.

¹⁷²*RH*, February 27, 1879, 70.

Establishment of a Society to Promote Sunday-keeping in Christiania

On December 22, Matteson wrote concerning the Sabbath question: “The Sabbath question had only been spoken of occasionally yet. Nevertheless, it has stirred up a zeal of leading men in the city, so that they held a mass meeting last night to establish a society in defense of the Sunday institution, and to take measures, by publishing tracts, writing articles etc., to bring about more sacred regard for the Sunday.”¹⁷³

The very first preliminary meeting to establish *Foreningen til Fremme af Søndagens rette Brug* (The Society for the Promotion of the Right Usage of Sunday) took place Sunday, December 22, only a week after thirty or more individuals decided publicly to commence keeping the seventh-day Sabbath as Seventh-day Adventists in Christiania.

The Sunday Society had in fact originated in Switzerland at the initiative of the Evangelical Alliance,¹⁷⁴ promoted especially by the banker Alexander Lombard of Gent and the Swiss theologian Godet.¹⁷⁵ Frédéric Louis Godet (1812-1900) became in 1873 one of the founders of the free Evangelical Church of Neuchâtel, and professor in its theological faculty. The instigator of *Foreningen til Fremme af Søndagens rette Brug* in Norway, pastor Johan C. H. Storjohan, attended this conference of the Evangelical Alliance in Switzerland.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³*RH*, January 23, 1879, 30.

¹⁷⁴*Ibid.*, January 29, 1880, 76.

¹⁷⁵*Aftenbaladet* (Evening Paper), December 24, 1878, 1.

¹⁷⁶*RH*, January 29, 1880, 76.

The newspapers *Aftenbladet* and *Fædrelandet* ¹⁷⁷ stated that 1,000 people attended this first meeting of *Foreningen til Fremme af Søndagens rette Brug* in the large hall of the labor union.¹⁷⁸ After an opening hymn and prayer, Pastor C. H. Storjohan, founder of the Sunday Society, opened his address by quoting Isa 58:13 and Rev 1:9,10. He compared the spirit and inventions of the time to the ocean, which unceasingly erodes one piece after another of Helgoland; similarly, unceasing restlessness erodes the Lord's Day. Arguing the importance of Sunday, and what a tragedy the loss of Sunday would be for the people, he called on all serious Christians to unite to dam up the current of the spirit of the times.¹⁷⁹

According to *Aftenbladet's* report of the meeting, Storjohan argued that creation and the Sabbath are inseparable ideas. God created and his creation should and must have rest. Sin made it necessary for the great God to state it in a commandment. After the first coming of Christ, he became the termination of the Sabbath commandment, so that those who believe may rest in sharp contrast with "the heavy loads of works" of the Old Testament dispensation. The Sabbath on which Jesus, after his day's work, rested in the grave, brought the Old Testament dispensation to a close. With Christ's resurrection on

¹⁷⁷ *Aftenbladet*, December 24, 1878, 1; *Fædrelandet* (Land of our Fathers), December 28, 1878, 2.

¹⁷⁸ Carsten Hansteen, *Kristiania Indremission 1855-1904: Et Festkrift til Femtiaarsjubiløet* (Christiania Inner Mission 1855-1904: Memorial writing concerning fifty years jubilee) (Kristiania: Foreningen for Indre Mission i Kristiania, 1905), 92, 93. "Large hall of the labor union" translates the Norwegian, *Arbejersamfundets store Sal*.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*; *Skilling-Magazinet* (Farthing-Magazine), January 4, 1879, 15.

the Sunday, a new creation began in the world, by which Jesus made all things new. The same is true of the Sabbath.¹⁸⁰

Pastor Storjohan then made a strong appeal to all state authorities, employers, and laborers to support this new society. Evidently he hoped that expressions of official opinion would favor his cause by helping spread literature regarding the significance of Sunday for the state, the family, and the civic society.¹⁸¹ Two other lecturers, Professor Ernst Ferdinand Lochmann and Pastor Jacob Neumann Mohn, also participated in the meeting. Professor Lochman pointed out the need of the human body to have proper rest, noting that the French Revolution of the eighteenth century had tried to change the seven-day cycle to a ten-day cycle without any success, hence man needed to rest every seventh day. Pastor Mohn talked about the importance of true Sunday-keeping for the family and the society at large.¹⁸² The meeting closed with “a beautiful devotion” by Pastor Sven Brun. Seventy-seven people pledged their allegiance to the new society that evening.¹⁸³

As Matteson reflected upon all the turmoil and opposition he had experienced during the year 1879 regarding *Foreningen til Fremme af Søndagens rette Brug*, he wrote his understanding and reaction December 31, 1879 as follows:

In Christiana and vicinity the cause is onward. The Sabbath question is the most interesting theme in Norway. Tract workers and colporteurs can sell Sabbath tracts the best. A Sunday movement is on foot in Norway, very much like that in America. When the Sabbath was proclaimed, it started the Sunday friends. A Sunday-society was formed, which tries, as far as possible, to enforce Sunday-keeping by law. Their missionary and head-leader held a series of meetings aimed against the doctrines of S.

¹⁸⁰ *Aftenbladet*, December 24, 1878, 1.

¹⁸¹ *Fædrelandet*, December 28, 1878, 2.

¹⁸² *Aftenposten*, December 24, 1878, 2.

¹⁸³ *Skilling-Magazinet*, January 4, 1879, 15.

D. Adventists, and then he went to the principal cities, from one end of Norway to the other, to labor for Sunday, and to inform, the people that a man had come from America who wanted people to keep the seventh day; that he caused much stir, but his influence was dangerous and should be avoided. This same missionary attended the meeting of the Evangelical Alliance in Switzerland, and labored zealously for Sunday. Then he came back, and lectured about this in the Lutheran mission-house, which is next to our meeting-house. We hope some of the old friends of the Sabbath in Switzerland will soon do what they can for the Sabbath of the Lord. Those movements are of the greatest interest in the light of prophecy, and we do not forget to call the attention of our friends in Northern Europe to these matters.¹⁸⁴

Ingemar Lindén said in his doctoral thesis of 1971: “As a consequence of Matteson’s attack on Sunday keeping there was organized a society to promote the holiness of the Sunday in Norway. The Sunday Society was temporarily established December 22, 1878, in the large hall of the labor union.”¹⁸⁵ Lindén was right on both accounts, because although there had been interest for better Sunday-keeping before Matteson’s arrival in Christiania, Matteson’s presence, identity, mission, and preaching about the seventh-day Sabbath further fueled the existing interest in the organizing of the Sunday Society.

The meeting Sunday, December 22, was a preparatory meeting for the later formal organization of the society of *Foreningen til Fremme af Søndagens rette Brug*. According to two newspapers which reported the meeting, no reference at all was made

¹⁸⁴*RH*, January 29, 1880, 76. The Evangelical Alliance is a London-based organization founded in 1846 and has over 3000 churches affiliated to it. The World Evangelical Alliance, founded in London in 1951, has its roots in the launch in 1846 of the Evangelical Alliance in the United Kingdom. It is a network of churches in 128 nations that have each formed an evangelical alliance and over 100 international organizations joining together to give a worldwide identity, voice and platform to more than 420 million evangelical Christians. See *Wikipedia–The Free Encyclopaedia*, s.v. “Evangelical Alliance” and “World Evangelical Alliance,” 2009.

¹⁸⁵Ingemar Lindén, *Biblicism Apocalyptic Utopi*, 211. “Large hall of the labor union” translates the Norwegian, *Arbejersamfundets store Sal*.

to Matteson and his friends as being either an indirect or direct influence in prompting this meeting or that it was done to oppose his mission.¹⁸⁶ That reference was, however, being made orally throughout the city by pastors Storjohan, Munch, Ring, and others, even in the very hall Matteson was preaching in on Sundays, the Maribo Street gymnasium.¹⁸⁷

The next great effort to speak in favor of Sunday-keeping was advertised in five of the most respected newspapers in Christiania: *Aftenposten*, *Aftenbladet*, *Dagbladet*, *Morgenposten*, and *Morgenbladet*. Professor Dr. Theol. Fredrik Wilhelm Klump Bugge would lecture in behalf of the Sunday Society on the topic: “Sunday and the Third Commandment.”¹⁸⁸ Bugge, a New Testament professor, was characterized as “one of the most prominent men within exegetical theology and classical philology, and was also a popular preacher.”¹⁸⁹ The venue was the Assembly Hall of the University in Domus Academica. The date was Friday, January 10, 1879, at 6:30 in the evening.¹⁹⁰ Such a crowd gathered that Matteson could “hardly find a place to stand.” The core of Dr. Bugge’s lecture was an attempt to provide “some divine authority for Sunday.”¹⁹¹ After

¹⁸⁶*Fædrelandet*, December 28, 1878, 2; *Aftenposten*, December 24, 1878, 2.

¹⁸⁷*RH*, January 23, 1879, 30.

¹⁸⁸*Aftenposten*, January 8, 1879, 2; *Aftenbladet*, January 7, 1879, 2; *Dagbladet*, January 8, and 9, 1879, 3; *Morgenposten*, January 9, 1879, 3; *Morgenbladet*, January 10, 1879, 2.

¹⁸⁹*Skilling-Magazinet*, April 5, 1890, 210.

¹⁹⁰*Aftenposten*, January 8, 1879, 2.

¹⁹¹*RH*, January 13, 1879, supplement, 54.

the lecture, people could sign up as members of *Foreningen til Fremme af Søndagens rette Brug*, which would be formally organized February 9, 1879, at Hauges Minde.¹⁹²

Two days after Bugge's lecture on "Sunday and the Third Commandment," Matteson delivered his first public lecture on Sabbath-keeping (Sunday January 12). The title of his lecture was: "Four Reasons Why the Sabbath of the Lord Decreed in Paradise Is Still Holy."¹⁹³

The Life and Death Question

Matteson's first Christmas in Norway was a busy one. He wrote December 30, 1878, that he had held twelve meetings during the past week.¹⁹⁴ He gave the last and most famous lecture of his series on "Life and Death," Sunday, December 29, at Maribo Street gymnasium at half past seven in the evening. The subject was: "The Punishment of the Ungodly; the Origin of the Devil, Fall and Destruction; the Eternal Torment; the Worm which Does Not Die; the Inextinguishable Fire; the Restoration of All Things."¹⁹⁵ About 1,000 people were present, including pastors, professors, preachers, and many students.¹⁹⁶ When Matteson declared the final destruction of the devil, people got very angry, because then there would be no one to keep the fires of hell going, which meant the end of torture

¹⁹²*Morgenposten*, February 8, and 9, 1879; *Dagbladet*, February 7, 1879; *Fædrelandet*, February 8, and 12, 1879; *Morgenposten*, February 8, 1879.

¹⁹³*RH*, January 13, 1879, 54; *Aftenposten*, January 11, 1879, 3; *Morgenbladet*, January 12, 1879, 2.

¹⁹⁴*RH*, January 30, 1879, 38.

¹⁹⁵*Aftenposten*, December 28, 1878, 4; *Morgenbladet*, December 29, 1878, 3.

¹⁹⁶*RH*, January 30, 1879, 38.

and just punishment for the wicked.¹⁹⁷ Matteson summed up this climactic meeting and its remarkable conclusion:

The life and death question has caused a great commotion. Upwards of one thousand people crowded into the hall last night to hear our closing lecture on this subject, and many more came and could not get in. This is a most tender point with these Norwegians. That the devil is to be destroyed causes great wrath among those who have largely imbibed his spirit. Priests, professors, and students met, besides a number of preachers. But the testimony became too strait for them. Towards the close of the sermon a preacher broke upon me. Hundreds expressed aloud their disapproval, but others were determined to sustain him. They hallooed amen, and made very noisy demonstrations, being led on by one of the popular preachers. About one-fourth of the congregation favored this move actively; but hundreds of voices tried to hush them, thus causing great excitement and disturbance. There was a commotion among the multitude like that of the waves of the sea.

I felt sorry, and was loath to have the meeting end in this way. Then a strong voice was suddenly heard, ringing out above the noisy clamor, demanding immediate quiet; and as by a sudden impulse all obeyed, and I finished the sermon and closed in the usual way.¹⁹⁸

After the meeting Matteson sold books “as fast as he could make the change for quite a while.” Most people did not want to go. Then suddenly “four policemen pressed slowly through the crowd and came” to Matteson. They asked if there was any “trouble.” Matteson told them that “all was well.” The next day Matteson’s meeting became “a general topic of discussion throughout the city.”¹⁹⁹

Perhaps the most succinct reactions concerning Matteson’s teaching about the mortality of the soul and God’s destruction of the devil came in the magazine *Vikingen* (The Viking): “When a Yankee Preacher some days ago had a revival meeting at Maribo Street School about the punishment in hell, a wheelwright stood up and spoke against

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ *RH*, January 30, 1879, 38.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

him. The consequence of that was that ‘things started to turn round’ for the wheelwright and everything turned into ‘a hell of an uproar.’”²⁰⁰

The magazine *Krydseren* (The frigate) said: “Among the most burning questions of the time, we can with full humor include the question about hell, which has turned hotter than ever, since a certain Matheson [*sic*] in his lecture has thrown a firebrand straight into hell with the purpose of consuming all. We hope that this correctional institution [Hell] is well insured.”²⁰¹

An article in the newspaper *Morgenbladet* referred to Matteson’s last lecture on “life and death” on December 29, and found it horrible that this “eloquent man” was able to speak against the “old orthodox theories of the Catholic and the Lutheran Churches” without being opposed by “learned or priestly opponents” in order to drive him “from the field,” unless this question is not important. “The guards of the walls of the city” should do their duty regarding such a daring attacker who attracts people of all denominations in the city and impresses all greatly. The author did not approve the behavior of the wheelwright and thought he was an unworthy opponent of Matteson, who waited calmly and quietly for everybody to calm down. Unfortunately, the wheelwright was supported by the old party of Haugians. The confusion and uproar was such that it looked as if some might lose both “life and limbs.” “At last,” said the author, “Matteson succeed in calming everybody down because of his ‘cool, composed and collected conduct.’”²⁰² However, the writer wanted some learned men to attack Matteson either orally or in writing, and the

²⁰⁰*Vikingen* (The Viking), January 4, 1879, 3.

²⁰¹*Krydseren* (The frigate), January 18, 1879, 3.

²⁰²*Morgenbladet*, December 31, 1878, 2.

sooner the better. The author wanted to know what Matteson's heresies consisted of, whether the third commandment about the Sabbath is still binding, whether grown-up baptism is the only right one, whether the prophecies of Jesus' soon coming are correct, whether man sleeps in his grave until the day of judgment, whether only the godly rise up from their graves at the second coming of Jesus, whether the ungodly after that rise up for the judgment and will finally be destroyed at the eternal punishment when all things dissolve and the earth is restored, where only the righteous shall live—that is to say, where no ungodly shall ever live. The final words of this writer are that Matteson preaches all Sundays at Maribo Street School, and every Tuesday and Thursday at eight o'clock in the evening to a packed house.²⁰³

Another writer said that when John G. Matteson was lecturing at Maribo Street School last Sunday night, a wheelwright, who was also an enthusiastic Haugian, interrupted his lecture on eternal torment and got so much support in the extremely crowded hall that some people ran for the doors. The writer thought it was thanks to God that no bones were broken, nor even worse things happened.²⁰⁴

Matteson never claimed it was his own voice that brought quiet to the audience, as did some of the newspapers, as well as the four policemen who arrived after order had been restored.²⁰⁵ According to Matteson, the voice that silenced the roaring crowd had come "from a tall man who stood on a bench" and shouted, "I command this audience in

²⁰³Ibid.

²⁰⁴*Morgenposten*, December 31, 1878, 2.

²⁰⁵*Morgenbladet*, December 31, 1878, 2.

the name of God and the King to immediately be quiet.” Matteson was sure that voice had been the voice of an “angel.”²⁰⁶

All these upheavals did not hurt Matteson’s mission. More and more people were subscribing to *Advent Tidende*, half of the eighty people who met regularly on the Sabbath for worship were keeping the day holy, and new ones were “continually becoming interested.” Matteson reported that the disturbances in his meetings and “the articles that have appeared in leading papers” had “greatly increased the interest” in his message. Matteson said that “five hundred people have pressed into our hired house” at Osterhausgaden 12, thus “occupying every apartment within the reach of my voice as well as the hall and stairs.”²⁰⁷ On Sunday evening, January 5, 1879, Matteson estimated that at least “twelve hundred people attended in the large hall” at Maribo Street School. “Every foot of the room was occupied,” he said, “so that there was only room left for me to stand on a box.” He reported that “forty friends signed the covenant last Sabbath” (January 4, 1879), “and we intend to fully organize a church in harmony with the Scripture and with the law of this country.” Matteson concluded his report by saying the “truth is working on hundreds of honest minds. A number of Swedes have embraced the truth. Many other places in Norway and Sweden seem to present just as good fields of labor.”²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ *ML*, 221-223.

²⁰⁷ *RH*, January 30, 1879, 38.

²⁰⁸ *RH*, February 6, 1879, 46.

Debate Regarding the Divinity of Christ

At the same time Matteson presented the seventh-day Sabbath as the true day of worship, and the possibility of immortality only through faith in Christ, he also happened to treat upon the nature of Christ. He seemed to think that Christ was God in the same way as men are spoken of as gods in Scriptures, since Christ is “born of God” (Ps 82:6). Matteson also said that “the Father was the only true God,” and that “Christ is a distinct person and being from the Father.”²⁰⁹ He also maintained that “the soul or life of Jesus ceased to exist when he died” and while he was in the grave.²¹⁰

The teaching of Matteson that God the Father is the only true God and that the life of Christ ceased to exist when he died implied that Christ was neither eternal nor immortal as God and consequently that God the Father and the Son did not exist together eternally. It further suggests that the pre-incarnate Jesus was not a perfectly divine being but rather was created by God and therefore inferior to the Father. This description of the relationship among the Trinity (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit) suggests such similarities to the classical Arian understanding of the nature of the Son of God, that Matteson can rightly be viewed as an Arian.

²⁰⁹John G. Matteson, *Skriftens Lære om Liv og Uforkrænkelighed* (Scripture’s teaching concerning life and incorruptibility), paragraph 23, under the heading *Faderen er den eneste sanne Gud* (The Father the only true God); quoted in S. A. Isaacson, *Hvilken Dag er de Kristnes rette Hviledag? Tilligemed Betragtning over Hr. J. G. Mattesons Svar i “Dagen”* (What day is the right day of rest for Christians? Including reflections concerning Mr. J. G. Matteson’s answer in the newspaper, *The Day*) (Kristiania: Den religiøse Traktatforenings, Bogtrykkeri Joh. Hansens Forlag, 1879), n.p.

²¹⁰John G. Matteson, *Liv og Død* (Life and death), para 41; quoted in S. A. Isaacson, *Hvilken Dag er de Kristnes rette Hviledag?* (What day is the right day of rest for Christians?), n.p.

A twenty-six-year-old Methodist pastor, Sakarias A. Isaacson, understood this as a total denial of the full divinity of Jesus Christ, and akin to the Arian heresy of the fourth century. Isaacson asked Matteson as he quoted John 17:3: “Does not Scripture say that there is only one God?”²¹¹ And Isaacson continued by asking, “If Christ does not share [equally] in the being of the true God, what then becomes of Christ’s true divinity?” Isaacson now quoted 1 John 5:20: “We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true--even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life”²¹² (NIV). Isaacson was so provoked and exasperated by Matteson’s Arianism that he did not want to talk with Matteson and some of his friends when they paid him a private visit once when Isaacson lay sick in his bed.²¹³

Unfortunately Pastor Isaacson drowned at only twenty-eight years of age when he was sailing across Sigle fjorden to visit a family on the other side at Hvaler. The small, open boat keeled over.²¹⁴ When Matteson heard the tragic news he thought it was “a very sad accident.” “He was a man in the prime of life and left behind a wife” and “two children.”²¹⁵

²¹¹S. A. Isaacson, *Hvilken Dag er de Kristnes rette Hviledag?* (What day is the right day of rest for Christians?), n.p.

²¹²*Ibid.*

²¹³*ML*, 220.

²¹⁴Johan Thorkildsen, *Den norske Metodiskirkes historie* (The Norwegian Methodist Church) (Norsk Forlagsselskap, 1929), 226; Eilert Bernhardt and Aage Hardy, *Metodiskirken i Norge i 100 år: 1858-1956* (The Methodist Church in Norway for 100 Years) (Oslo: Metodistkirken i Norge, 1956), 139.

²¹⁵*ML*, 220; Bernhardt and Hardy, 139.

It should be noted that Matteson's view of the Godhead was the belief of most Adventists of the time. Between 1898 and 1946, however, Adventists came to accept the basic Trinitarian idea of one God in three co-equal and co-eternal divine persons.²¹⁶

Organization of the First Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway

From Osterhausgaden 12, on January 13, 1879, Matteson reported: "Last Sabbath we formed a church under the law of dissenters in this country. We went before the authorities, and were by them acknowledged as a Christian church agreeable to law. Thirty-three persons signed their names."²¹⁷ The entire two documents presented to the authorities of Norway for the right to organize a Seventh-day Adventist Church in Christiania, Norway, are as follows:

First document:

Kristiania, 11 January, 1879

The undersigned hereby assures the honorable authorities, that I in my position as pastor for the organized Seventh-day Adventist Church, here in the city, will adhere to the laws of the state and be faithful to truth and duty, so help me God and his holy Word.

John G. Matteson²¹⁸

Second document:

Osterhausgaden 12, Kristiania, Norway, January 11, 1879

The honored Authorities are hereby most humbly informed that we the undersigned living in Christiania, have today united to form a Christian

²¹⁶See Woodrow Whidden, Jerry Moon, and John Reeve, *The Trinity: Understanding God's Love, His Plan of Salvation, and Christian Relationships* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002), 196-200.

²¹⁷ *RH*, February 13, 1879, supplement, 54.

²¹⁸Copies of the Norwegian originals are found in Appendix D.

Church by the name “The first Seventh-day Adventist Church in Christiania.” We have unanimously chosen John G. Matteson to be our pastor or superintendent.

We believe in one true God, the Father; in the one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, who died for our sins, rose for our Righteousness, ascended to heaven, serves as a High Priest in the sanctuary and will soon return to judge the living and the dead. We also believe in the Holy Spirit as the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who proceeds from the Father and works in man for wakening, conversion, and sanctification. We accept the Bible as the only true rule of our Christian faith and conduct, and desire in accordance with it to worship God in harmony with the conviction of our conscience. We acknowledge that the Ten Commandments contain the main sum of [our] duty to God and neighbor; and that they in every respect are unchangeable. That is why we keep the seventh day of the week holy.

We also acknowledge that it is our Christian duty to be submissive to the Authorities, provided they do not demand of us something contrary to the Word of God; because then we have to obey God rather than men. In addition, we pledge to live in stillness as good and peaceful citizens. We worship at Osterhausgaden 12 and Maribogaden Gymnasium.

Yours sincerely:

John G. Matteson
Anna Matteson
Ole Johansen
August Iversen
Dorthea Martinsen
Louise Ekaling
August Eriksen
O. Johnsen
Joh. Johannessen
Marie Johannessen
Oluf Emil Iversen
Z. Wesseltoft
Andreas Brorsen
Hakon Kristofersen
T. Martinsen
Anna Vie
Maria Kauluni
Caroline Johnson
Emma Stinnesen
Johanne Jensen
Marie Veseltoft
Anna Syversen
E. Eriksen Hagen
Jens Andersen
Hagebert Haagensen

Petter Haakonsen
Gustav Adolph Dahlin
Maren Amundsen
Anna Engström
Cathinka Svenson
Carl Hegerström
Lars Johan Asp
Gulbrand Gulbarndsen
Johan Nilson²¹⁹

Some of the above-mentioned persons had earlier been members of the Norwegian Baptist Church in Christiania, but how many or who they were is unknown.

Matteson had said that on Sabbath, December 14, they had had their first Sabbath meeting, at which forty-five persons had been present, thirty or more of whom had decided to keep the Sabbath. Many of these had been Baptists.²²⁰ This is confirmed by Peder A. Eidberg.²²¹ In June 1879 when their pastor, S. Swensson, left the Baptist Church in Christiania, there were only seven members left. In 1880 the Baptist Church in Christiania was dissolved. It had been organized in 1874, but according to Peder A. Eidberg “was dissolved mainly because of Adventism which came to the country at that

²¹⁹The original documents are preserved in the State Archives in Oslo, Norway. See a copy of them in appendix B.

²²⁰*RH*, January 16, 1879, 21.

²²¹ Per Overland, ed., *Norske Frikirker* (Norwegian free Churches); Peder A. Eidberg, *Baptistene i Norge* (The Baptists in Norway) (Trondheim: Religionsvitenskaplig institutt, Universitetet i Trondheim, 1981), 56.

Enoch Richard Haftorsen Svee, a young Norwegian supported by American Baptists, returned to Norway in 1842 and ministered there, but died before any churches were established. The first Baptist church in Norway was founded at Skien in 1862 by Frederick Ludvig Rymker, a former Danish sailor-turned-missionary. The Baptists formed regional associations. The first (South) was formed in 1872, and the North and West in 1877. Thirteen representatives from eight churches met and formed the *Norwegian Baptist Union* (NBU) in 1878, with Janne M. Sjødahl elected its first general secretary in 1879. *Wikipedia*, 2008 ed., s.v. “Norwegian Baptist Union.”

time.” It was reestablished in 1884 on the arrival of the Baptist minister Andreas Jørgensen.²²²

The above-mentioned creed signed by thirty-four persons contains general confessions generally accepted as truths by most Protestant churches and is worded somewhat similarly to the Apostles’ Creed. However, Matteson’s creed is of particular interest as to what it does not say. It is totally silent concerning death as a sleep in the grave, eternal life after the present life, and total destruction of the ungodly. Thus there is no mention of Matteson’s great theme of “life and death” so eloquently presented in his lectures which caused so much upheaval. There is not even a hint of “the resurrection of the body [flesh]; and the life everlasting” referred to in the Apostles’ Creed. Matteson also totally avoids the word “hell,” which the Apostles’ Creed says Christ descended into.²²³ The Apostles’ Creed was fully accepted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Norway at the time of the establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway and still is. Why Matteson used some parts of the Apostles’ Creed and not others is a valid question.

The real reason for the omission of “hell and life everlasting” by the thirty-three who signed the creed may never be known, but in the light of Matteson’s lectures in Christiania on “life and death,” the exclusion is strange to say the least, especially since his creed included the keeping of the seventh day as Sabbath, an understanding fiercely opposed by all of the clergy and most of the laity in Christiania at the time.

²²²Fritjov Iversen, *Norges Baptister* (Norwegian Baptists) (Oslo: Norsk Litteraturselskap, 1960), 40.

²²³Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 2 (New York: Harper, 1919), 45.

As mentioned above, it was Matteson's lectures on "the life and death question" which caused the greatest "commotion" in Christiania. Matteson said this was the "the most tender point with these Northmen," and that "the testimony became too strait for them."²²⁴ Did Matteson's "strait testimony" concerning "life and death" cause so much commotion that, at the "request" of the authorities, he had to exclude from his creed any statement about that particular belief? A year after the organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Christiania, Matteson said it had been established in accordance with the "demands of the Authorities." The omission in the creed may indicate some of those demands made by the public officers.²²⁵

At the commencement of Matteson's work in Christiania, very heated discussions had been going on in Norway and in particular in Christiania about hell and eternal torment in the light of God's love and justice. Among those who participated in the debate was one of Norway's most beloved poets and writers, Bjørstjerne Bjørnson, who thought that God's love and eternal torment were two irreconcilable ideas. Bjørnson's ideas were so much hated by the majority in Norway that he was put in the same category as Matteson by the Evangelical Lutheran Church. The magazine *Luthers Kirketidende* said:

It is a remarkable sign of the times that the teaching of the eternal torment has as of lately become a heated question among us. Bjørnson's known denial of it, and the appearance of the Danish-American fanatic John G. Matteson in Christiania have each in their own way spread doubt in the hearts of those who have wanted to doubt it and partially needed information from the word of God and spiritual experience. Such individuals always run the risk of being "tossed back and forth by the waves, and

²²⁴*RH*, January 30, 1879, 38.

²²⁵*TT*, January 15, 1880, 15.

blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming [Eph 4:14].”²²⁶

Three days after organizing the church, Matteson received the following announcement from the office of the District Stipendiary Magistrate to the Dean of the Christiania Parish:

From
The District Stipendiary Magistrate in Christiania.

It is hereby announced that it has been made known to the District that a church has been organized under the name: “The first Seventh-day Adventist Church in Christiania.” As a superintendent for the church, John G. Matteson has been chosen and approved.

Christiania 14th Jan 1879

To Christiania Stiftprostiet.²²⁷

Before, during, and after the organization of the first Seventh-day Adventist church in Christiania, Norway, the opposition was fierce and methodically planned and executed. The newspaper *Morgenposten* mentions especially pastors Storjohan, Brun, Riddervold, and Færden as defenders of the orthodoxy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Norway against Matteson’s new doctrines that “Saturday and not Sunday shall be the day of rest for the Christians, that the spirit of man between death and judgment is not an independent being, that both the devil and the ungodly shall burn up in the fire of hell, so that the torture accordingly shall not be eternal, as the holy Scripture teaches in many places. In addition, he denies, like all the Baptists, the legitimacy of infant

²²⁶G. Blom and Th. Klaveness, eds., “Læren om de evige Straffe” (The teaching of the eternal punishments), *Luthersk Kirketidende* (Lutheran church news), February 22, 1879, 81. My translation of Eph 4:14 follows the NIV.

²²⁷*Christiania Stiftprostiet* reads Christiania Bishopric. Document preserved in Prostiarkivene, Stiftprostiet, Korrespondanse, Brev, Eske 13 (1871-90) (The Archive of the Deanery, Bishopric, Correspondence, Letter, Box 13 [1871-90], the National Archives in Oslo, Norway).

baptism.” The article concluded by expressing the hope that Matteson would “soon have had his day here.”²²⁸

On the other hand, James White, then president of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists, was very happy with Matteson’s work. He said: “The *Review* of March 6 contains interesting and startling news of the work in Norway. What a statement is this from Elder Matteson in his report from Christiania!”²²⁹

Matteson had reported in the *Review*, March 6: “Wednesday evening we secured a large hall in the theater, in order to get a reply before many. About eighteen hundred crowded in, and many went away for want of room.”²³⁰ James White’s responded:

Eighteen hundred persons in one assembly, listening to the defense of the great truth for our time, trampled under feet of priests, and misrepresented and slandered in the public prints! These make hard work for those, who like Paul, are ‘set for the defense of the gospel;’ but they have a part to act in the closing work. Without them the world would hardly know we were in it. The battle goes well.²³¹

This organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Christiania on January 11, 1879, was apparently not accepted by the General Conference of Adventists, since the church was not admitted into the sisterhood of SDA churches until June 7, 1879, after a reorganization of the church had taken place.²³² According to the minutes of the Church Book of Records for the SDA Church in Christiania, dated June 7, 1879, there was a

²²⁸*Morgenposten*, June 5, 1879, 2.

²²⁹James White, “The Work in Norway,” *RH*, March 20, 1879, 92.

²³⁰Matteson, “Christiania, Norway,” *RH*, March 6, 1879, 87.

²³¹James White, “The Work in Norway,” *RH*, March 20, 1879, 92.

²³²*Evangelists Sendebud*, no. 11, 1978, 21.

meeting at Akersveien 2 in Christiania, where the members made the following agreement: “We, the undersigned brothers and sisters in the Lord hereby assume the name Seventh-day Adventists and make a pact with one another to keep the Commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” This agreement is much shorter than the first one, but contains the promise to “keep the Commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” which is not found in the first brief statement of religious belief or confession of faith of January 11. The minutes of June 7 have the appearance of a reorganization of the church. According to Matteson the reorganization was done according to Adventist practice, but to some degree adapted by Matteson to fit the local situation, and without any interference from the authorities of the state.²³³ The words of Matteson “without any interference from the authorities of the state” suggest that he did not send the reorganization papers to state authorities, since he had already done so on January 11.

The date of reorganization coincides exactly with the date of the acceptance of the church into the sisterhood of churches by the General Conference of Adventists, suggesting that both parties reached an understanding regarding the date of organization and acceptance, sometime before the event itself occurred.

The question may be asked: Was the original organization of the church on January 11 not accepted by the General Conference of Adventists because the words to “keep the Commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” were lacking in the first confession of faith? That is most likely the reason, because, according to church policy, “charter members are to form a church by signing” the following church covenant: “We, the undersigned, hereby associate ourselves together, as a church, taking the name

²³³AT, November 1879, 230; *Morgenposten*, 31 May 1879, 2.

Seventh-day Adventists, covenanting to keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus Christ.” This procedure for organizing a new local church had been voted during the organization of the Michigan Conference, October 4-6, 1861. The present practice remains the same.²³⁴

Were Matteson’s organizing of the church on January 11, and his subsequent purchase of property for a church building, viewed by church leaders in America as independent and unilateral decisions that he should have sought their counsel on? If so, these actions may have contributed to the crisis that later arose between Matteson and the American leaders.

What also seems strange is the major discrepancy between the contents of the two lists of January 11 and June 7. The book of Church Records of June 7, 1879, has the following list of charter members:

John G. Matteson
Anna Matteson
Zakarias Wesseltoft
Marie Wesseltoft
Oluf Johnson
Alfred Jakobsen
Jens Andersen
Johanne M. Andersen
John P. Roskvist (also spelled Rosqvist)
G. Marie Kanlum
Lars Gustav Olsen
Anna K. Rögeberg
Karoline Hendiriksen
Andreas Stenesen
Anders Andersen
Anna Engström
Karoline Andersen
P. M. Hansen Klungland
Lars Martinussen

²³⁴*Review and Herald*, October 9, 1861, 148. Also *SDAE*, 1996 ed., s.v. “Organization, Development of, in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.”

Karoline Johnson
Ole Johansen
Karl Kristiansen
M. Johannessen Vold
Anna Svendsen
Fredrik Tronsen
Karen Tronsen
Anton Herman Larsen
August Eriksen
Sarah Kaiser Johansen
Nikoline Mathisen
Torger Andersen
Bertoline Olsen
Gulbrand Gulbrandsen
Lars Johan Asp
Torvald Svensen
Gunnaar Kr. Hoel
Anna Syvertsen
Julie Johansen

This June list has 38 names, compared to 34 in the January list given above, and only 10 names are on both lists. The 10 names on both lists are:

John G. Matteson
Anna Matteson
Zakarias Wesseltoft
Marie Wesseltoft (different spelling from her signature on the first list)
Anna Egstrom
Ole Johansen
M. Johannessen Vold (possibly)
Gulbrand Gulbrandsen
Lars Johan Asp
Anna Syvertsen

The following names which are on the first list appear in the book of Church

Records after June 7:

Hagebert Haagensen
Emma Stinesen
Johanne Jensen
Anna Vie

So on June 7, 1879, there were officially thirty-eight members in the SDA Church in Christiania. On June 13 six more people were added to the church, on June 27 nine were added, on 28 June one was added, on July 4 two were added, on July 5 two were added, on July 21 four were added, on August 9 five were added, on August 20 two (Swedes) were added, on October 4 eight were added, and on November 10 five were added. By the end of 1879, there were eighty-two members in the SDA Church in Christiania, including four people he baptized on January 2, 1880, which would make a total of eighty-six by then. But according to Matteson in *Tidernes Tegn*, January 15, 1880, ninety people had been “baptized into the death of Jesus” and “made a covenant to keep the Commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus” during 1879. In reporting ninety in *Tidernes Tegn*, Matteson may simply have been using a round number. Or, like many pastors, he may have been keeping his own informal count and did not realize the discrepancy with the Book of Church Records kept by the church clerk.²³⁵

A plausible explanation for the discrepancy between the two membership lists of January 11 and June 7, 1879, may be Matteson’s statement in November 1879 that there were two types of members in his church:

According to the laws of this land [Norway] those who leave the state church and wish to register themselves and join other religious societies, have their names inscribed in a protocol in the church they prefer. Accordingly we also inscribe the names of such. They are searching souls and regard our assembly house as their religious home. When they begin to obey the Lord they are baptized and are accepted as full members and have access to the ordinances of the House of the Lord. In this

²³⁵ *Menighedsbog for den første Syvende-Dags Adventist Menighed, Kristiania, Norge (fra 1879 til 1888)*. (Book of Church Records for the first Seventh-day Adventist Church, Christiania, Norway (from 1879 to 1888)), HASDA in Oslo, Norway, 13-18. In *Tidernes Tegn*, January 15, 1880, 15, Matteson used the wording called for in the official church policy.

way we have many friends beside our own church members, and they participate in many ways in the support of the work and spreading the truth.²³⁶

This statement suggests that both lists could have included a large proportion of “searching souls” who “preferred” the Adventist church, but had not yet made a commitment to it. Persons in this “searching” position would find it easier to change their preference than those who had been publicly rebaptized as “full members.” The possibility that many who considered themselves “members,” but were actually only seekers, may have even changed their minds about becoming Adventists, suggests a reason why the Adventist Church in Christiania later faced severe problems.²³⁷

Another factor in the fluctuating membership in Christiania could be that between January and June, some members moved away from Christiania. According to the Book of Church Records, the total membership of the church in Christiania was 118 at the end of 1880, 142 at the end of 1881, 161 at the end of 1882, 176 at the end of 1883, 188 at the end of 1884, and 203 at the end of 1885. During 1886, 14 members emigrated to the United States, 6 went to Sweden, 1 to Denmark, 23 to other locations in Norway, 10 deceased, and 32 were disfellowshipped (excommunicated), making a total decrease of 86 members. That left the church with 117 members the year Ellen G. White arrived in Christiania. That so many were disfellowshipped could be indicative of turmoil whose roots went back almost to the very beginning of the SDA church in Christiania.²³⁸

²³⁶AT, November 1879, 230. On the “friends,” see also p. 260, below.

²³⁷This will be dealt with in chapter 5.

²³⁸*Menighedsbog for den første Syvende-Dags Adventist Menighed, Kristiania, Norge (fra 1879 til 1888)* (Book of Church Records for the first Seventh-day Adventist Church, Christiania, Norway [from 1879 to 1888]), HASDA in Oslo, Norway, 3-11, 13-18.

At the same time the church was reorganized, the new building was dedicated. Concerning the newly purchased church building at Akersgaten 2, Matteson said: “the old Eugenia Institute” was dedicated during Whitsuntide on June 7, 1879. This was the first Sabbath the members came together in their own church building.²³⁹

**The Beginning of Seventh-day Adventist
Publishing in Norway: *Tidernes Tegn***

The written word was, indeed, the right hand of Matteson’s work. Matteson as a laborer in word and doctrine had done what he could in presenting the truth. But he knew that unless there was a more thorough effort made to fasten these impressions upon the minds of his adherents, his efforts could prove nearly fruitless, because of the many opposing clergy, as well as the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches, which all combined will choke the seed of truth sown in the heart.

Matteson knew that in every effort such as he was now making, much more good would result from his and others’ labors if they had appropriate reading matter ready for circulation. Tracts upon the important points of truth for the present time were needed to hand out freely to all who would accept them. Matteson would have to sow beside all waters. The press was a powerful means used by opponents to move the minds and hearts of the people. The men of this world seized the press, and made the most of every opportunity to get their point of view before the people. Matteson was therefore more determined and more earnest than ever before to get reading matter of an elevating and saving character before the people. “Would to God we had a paper here,” he wrote on

²³⁹AT, November 1879, 230. Akersvejen (sometimes also spelled Akersgaden) 2 is the original street name and number of the present-day Akersgaten 74, Oslo, Norway.

Monday, December 20, “and facilities for publishing tracts to go out to the starving thousands of this country.”²⁴⁰

Thursday, January 9, 1879, Matteson reported that on Sunday, January 5, “about twelve hundred people attended the meeting . . . and crowds went away for lack of room.”²⁴¹ He went on to say that “under these circumstances, I have deemed it duty to commence printing a small weekly paper about two-thirds of the size of one-fourth of the Review” and “eight pages.”²⁴² “This is simply a temporary paper, like a tent paper. I take no subscriptions, but sell them at five øre, or two cents, apiece.”²⁴³

On Monday, January 13, 1879, Matteson wrote again concerning a new paper he had been working on: “I got a little sheet printed this week called *Signs of the Times*, and intend to print one every week. It is no subscription paper yet. We will sell them by the piece. We sold about five hundred copies on Sunday. The people must have the truth in print, and our tracts are nearly all gone.”²⁴⁴ On the Sunday here referred to (January 12, 1879), Matteson sold 500 copies of *Tidernes Tegn*, for the first time it seems. Later, for awhile, he printed 1500 copies “every week.”²⁴⁵

²⁴⁰*RH*, January, 9, 1879, 14.

²⁴¹*RH*, February 13, 1879, 52.

²⁴²*ML*, 239.

²⁴³*RH*, February 13, 1879, 52.

²⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 54. To begin with it contained mainly Matteson’s sermons. For the first three months it was published weekly and then semimonthly. The magazine has continued under different names and is at present the monthly *Tidens Tale* (Voice of the times).

²⁴⁵*ML*, 239.

The only trace of the very first issues of *Tidernes Tegn* to be found anywhere so far is a supplement in the back of Matteson's autobiography, where reference is made to the issue of January 9, 1879.²⁴⁶ Matteson's first-ever reference to *Tidernes Teg* on Thursday, January 9, 1879, and his statements a few days later that he "got a little sheet printed this week called *Signs of the Times*," and "sold about five hundred copies" on Sunday, January 12, all seem to point to Thursday, January 9, as the most likely date for the publishing of the very first issue of *Tidernes Tegn*. On the previous Monday, December 30, 1878, Matteson had written, "Would to God we had a paper here, and facilities for publishing tracts to go out to the starving thousands of this country."²⁴⁷ This statement shows that on December 30, the paper was not yet ready for publication, and raises the likelihood that on Wednesday, January 1, 1879, the first issue was still not finished, despite Matteson's later recollection that he had published it January 1, 1879. On Monday, January 20, Matteson stated that the "second number of our small paper *Tidernes Tegn*, has been printed [on Wednesday January 15]."²⁴⁸ About seven hundred copies have been circulated in the city, and we have two days in which to distribute more before the next number is printed" on Wednesday, "January 22."²⁴⁹ On February 5, Matteson wrote: "Our paper, *Tidernes Tegn*, pays its own way," and expressed his desire to "be able to print it" himself.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶Ibid., 290.

²⁴⁷*RH*, January 9, 1879, 14.

²⁴⁸*ML*, 293.

²⁴⁹Ibid., 294

²⁵⁰*RH*, March 6, 1879, 78.

This small and humble beginning of the first paper of the first Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway, January 9, 1879, was the real beginning of Seventh-day Adventist publishing work in Norway. To begin with, it was published once a week and then semimonthly.²⁵¹ The magazine has continued under different names and is at present the monthly *Tidens Tale* (Voice of the times).

The Seventh-day Adventist General Conference Committee, meeting from April 17 to 21, 1879, endorsed the publication of *Tidernes Tegn* and recommended that Matteson should continue its publication. It was also decided that Anna Rasmussen and Elder J. P. Jaspersen should join Matteson in Christiania.²⁵² Matteson said that they were also allowed to buy types and material. During the summer that same year Matteson bought a hand press he used for two years. Thus began the first Seventh-day Adventist publishing house outside of North America.²⁵³ Almost immediately Matteson advertised that they were able to print “both for themselves and others.”²⁵⁴

Later that year in the publishing room, according to Matteson, Anna Rasmussen was busy setting the type and Tina, Matteson’s daughter, was assisting her. Tina was also

²⁵¹*ML*, 290-296.

²⁵²*TT*, May 15, 1879, 31.

²⁵³The earliest Adventist publishing houses were established as follows: (1) Review and Herald, Battle Creek, MI, USA, 1849; (2) Pacific Press, Oakland, California, USA, 1875; (3) Norsk Bokforlag (Norwegian Publishing House), Christiania, Norway, 1879; (4) Imprimerie Polyglotte (Multi-lingual bookstore), Basel, Switzerland, 1885; and (5) Bible Echo Publishing House, Australia, 1886. See Karl Abrahamsen, *Norsk Bokforlag 100 år* (Norwegian Publishing House 100 Years), 11 (Oslo: Norsk Bokforlag, 1979), 20; *SDAE*, s.v. “Life and Health Publishing House (France),” and “Signs Publishing Company” [Australia].

²⁵⁴*Ibid.*, September 1, 1879, 88.

learning bookkeeping and how to send the huge mailing. Samuel, Matteson's son, rolled on the ink. Matteson paid his children for their work.²⁵⁵

Two years later in 1881, when Matteson returned from consulting with church leaders in North America, he bought a used cylinder press with his own money. The leadership in North America had agreed that if it worked well, the church would buy it later. Also in 1881, Matteson commenced publishing a health magazine called *Sundhedsbladet* (Health paper). Books and tracts followed by the thousands as the years went by.²⁵⁶

Stephen Haskell, visiting Norway in 1882, reported a meeting on May 21 to establish a publishing association in Christiania.²⁵⁷ The correct date is more likely July 27, 1882.²⁵⁸ Until then, Matteson had been the legal owner of the publishing house, but from then on a publishing association would "own and direct the printing office" Matteson had established."²⁵⁹ Matteson appreciated very much the unlimited freedom of the press in Norway which he thought was not the case in other European countries.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁵John G. Matteson to James White, August 13, 1879, Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, MD; *RH*, February 13, 1879, 136. Six of the Mattesons' children—Christina, Samuel, Martha, Alexander, Daniel, and John—arrived in Christiania, Norway July 10, 1879. Matilda, the eldest, had died in Michigan. *GV*, 86.

²⁵⁶*ML*, 239, 242.

²⁵⁷*AT*, July 1882, 200.

²⁵⁸*AT*, September, 224; *Tidernes Tegn*, March 1883, 46; Karl Abrahamsen, 20. It is also possible that there was more than one meeting on such an important action.

²⁵⁹*TT*, August 15, 1882, 126.

²⁶⁰*Ibid.*, December 1, 1879, 136.

The very first article by Ellen G. White published in Norway appeared in *Tidernes Tegn*, February 15, 1881, while Matteson was visiting in the USA.²⁶¹ About a year earlier, James White had requested Matteson to translate some of Ellen G. White's writings. Matteson stated that he would be happy to translate some of her writings, but noted that some of them would be "quite difficult to translate."²⁶²

On February 21, 1879, Ellen G. White wrote a letter to the Mattesons expressing her thanks to God for Matteson's success. She said she often thought of them being so far away. Then she pointed out to Anna, Matteson's wife, that in her discipline of her children, "firm justice" had often excluded its "twin sister, love." The same had been true of her dealings with church members.²⁶³

Matteson's answer to White was only five lines, in which he thanked her for good advice which he would make use of. He then expressed his desire for someone of experience to give help and counsel to the work in Norway.²⁶⁴ This brief reaction by Matteson may be indicative of what was to come during Ellen G. White's first two visits to Norway as will be seen in chapter 5.

²⁶¹ *TT*, February 15, 1881, 35.

²⁶² John G. Matteson to James White, April 27, 1880. This may be a reference not only to the difficulty of simple translating, but especially to the difficulty of harmonizing some of her writings with the way Matteson was leading the Christiania church. See "Time of Crisis," below.

²⁶³ Ellen G. White to John G. Matteson, February 21, 1879.

²⁶⁴ John G. Matteson to Ellen G. White, March 24, 1879.

Akersgaten 74²⁶⁵

When Matteson tried to renew his three months' tenancy agreement for the gymnasium at the Latin- and Realskole on Maribo Street, principal Peter Quam declined. Matteson said: If the "principal of the Latin school had not been a broad-minded and a liberal man I would have been thrown out from here, long before the three months expired." The tumult and uproar had been such that Bishop C. P. Essendrop had urged principal Quam to stop Matteson's meetings. Principal Quam's response was that he would keep his tenancy agreement with Matteson.²⁶⁶

On December 22, 1878, long before the lease expired, Matteson wrote that the very popular pastor, J. Storm Munch, of the Lutheran Church preached at the Latin school three times a week where "he pronounced us heretics and warned the people against us."²⁶⁷ Pastor Munch tried to get Matteson out, "but being unsuccessful, he suddenly left the hall entirely."²⁶⁸ Then Pastor Fredrik Ring hired the same gymnasium Matteson used. He also tried to get Matteson out from there. Matteson said: "They figured to prolong their meetings and stop their members, and pay extra to get me out, but all in vain."²⁶⁹

When the parents of the students threatened to remove their children from the school, principal Quam was forced not to renew the lease. Matteson said: "He told me

²⁶⁵ Akersgaten 74 is the present-day street number of the original Eugenia-Institution Estate, Akersvejen no. 2 bought in 1879. Today it houses the Betel SDA Church in Oslo, Norway.

²⁶⁶ *ML*, 225.

²⁶⁷ *RH*, January 23, 1879, 30.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, January 23, 1879, 30.

that he was very sad not to be able to let me have the gymnasium of the Latin school any longer.”²⁷⁰ The lease expired February 15. Matteson said: “After the 15th of February I cannot have the larger hall in the Latin school any more, and it is doubtful whether I can get any other of suitable size.”²⁷¹

Matteson was not going to give up. On the contrary he viewed the difficulties as an opportunity to break new ground for his mission in Christiania. He said: “This attempt to exclude me from all larger halls led us to buy the property in Akersgaden just opposite to the Catholic Church”²⁷² and near a large Lutheran church, “fronting a business street.”²⁷³

On February 5, 1879, four days before Matteson’s last meeting at the Maribo Street gymnasium, he reported that “a singular opportunity to buy has come our way, and we all think, it would be best to take hold of it before others took it from us.”²⁷⁴ A week later, on February 12, Matteson wrote in *Tedernes Tegn*: “Our work in Christiania has not been stopped, but advancing all the time. We have bought a property—a section of Eugenia-Institution Estate, Akersvejen no. 2—which will be fitted up as an assembly hall in April.”²⁷⁵

²⁶⁹Ibid., January 23, 1879, 30.

²⁷⁰*ML*, 225, 226.

²⁷¹*RH*, January 13, 1879, supplement, p. 54.

²⁷²*ML*, 226.

²⁷³*RH*, March 6, 1879, 78.

²⁷⁴*AT*, March 1879, 89; *RH*, March 6, 1879, 78.

²⁷⁵*TT*, February 12, 1879; quoted in *ML*, 295.

The Eugenia Refuge Institute was established in 1837 by King Carl Johan for, to begin with, twenty-four girls. Boys would be admitted later. The Institute got its name from its patroness, princess Eugenia of Norway and Sweden. The Institute was first located at Theatergaden Matr.-No 2. In 1842 it was moved to a new building at Matr.- No 2 and 2b Akerveien where about 150 to 200 children were registered.²⁷⁶

Matteson thought the buying of this property was “a huge undertaking for such a small society,” which they had formed “to purchase a property for the use” of the SDA Church. He was happy with the “central” location of the building, the assembly hall on second floor that would “make room for eight hundred to one thousand people,” the good space of “70 x 70 feet, suitable” for a printing office, and 70 x 150 feet, for chapel,” and for the “rest of the building which could be rented to families.” They were to “occupy the house by the 15th of April,” and “pay 54,000 Kroner (about \$15,000) for the property, with 5 per cent interest, and thirty-three years in which to pay the whole.” Matteson added, “The first five years we are to pay 1000 Kroner (\$266) annually on the capital, and after this time twice that amount.”²⁷⁷ His mission was thus still characterized by the twin principles of preaching and publishing.

The seller was Eugenia Stiftelsen of Christiania. Those who signed the sales contract on behalf of the Seventh-day Adventist Church were: “L. Hansen, Jon. Johannessen, John G. Matteson, Z. Weyertoft [Wesseltoft], C. Larsen.” Two of these names, L. Hansen and C. Larsen, had not appeared on the application to the authorities of

²⁷⁶Christiania Magistrate, *Femtiaars-Beretning om Christiania Kommune for Aarene 1837-1886* (Christiania Magistrate, Fifty Years Description of Christiania County 1837-1886) (Christiania: Christiania Kommune, 1892), 339.

²⁷⁷*ML*, 226; *RH*, March 6, 1879, 78.

January 11 the same year for permission to establish the SDA Church in Christiania. The names of Lars Hansen and his wife Thea were entered in the Church Book of Records for the SDA Church in Christiania June 14, but the name of C. Larson is nowhere to be found in the Norwegian SDA records. He may have belonged to the SDA Church in Denmark and had the right to sign the document, since the two countries were united politically, or he may have been one of the “friends” of the church who never became a full member. The deed of transference of the property to the Seventh-day Adventist Church was issued July 9, 1887.²⁷⁸

Having bought the property, Matteson sent the following report to the *Review and Herald*: “Next Sunday is our last day we can have this hall [Maribo Street gymnasium]. It is a continual strife to get rooms for meetings, because our opposers are trying to drive us out everywhere. For this reason, our *friends* have formed a society to purchase property for the use of the SDA Church” (italics supplied).²⁷⁹

James White responded: “The statement by Bro. Matteson, that he had purchased real estate in Christiania to the amount of fifteen thousand dollars, really startled us at first.” But, White continued, as “we read his explanation of the reasons for so doing,

²⁷⁸Leif A. Nielsen, “Litt angående eiendommen Akersgt. 74 og Thor Olsensgt. 1 i 1879 og frem til nyere tid” (A few things concerning the property of Akersgt. 74 and Thor Olsengt. 1 in 1879 and until later times) (Unpublished paper, 1974), 1. The double *s* in Wesseltoft’s signature looks like a double German *s* and may therefore have been understood by Nielsen as *ye*, hence the spelling “Weyertoft.” The Dane Lars Hansen may have been the chair of the committee who signed the contract, since his name appears first of the signatures and since he was a building contractor, an experienced mason, and sometimes called a master builder. I will present more on him in chapter 5.

²⁷⁹*RH*, March 6, 1879, 78. Matteson sent this article dated February 5, 1879. The phrase “our friends” is the same term Matteson used elsewhere to designate seekers who were attending church, but had not yet committed to full membership. See above, pp. 249-250, n. 236.

setting forth both the necessities of the case and the easy terms upon which the purchase is made, the movement appeared more consistent.”²⁸⁰

President James White’s response is remarkably humble when compared to the amazing independence of Matteson. Having been both alarmed and shocked by the news, White even tried to justify the purchase of Matteson by pointing out the “necessities of the case and the easy terms upon which the purchase” was made. He could have told Matteson to abandon the purchase since the ultimate responsibility was with the General Conference as the third party. White’s understanding as a leader to carry forward the work of a growing church and his sense of responsibility was the more remarkable when seen in the light of the fact that he was in charge of the SDA Church worldwide, yet not informed about such a large purchase, yet obliged to be answerable for payments for the next 33 years of which he knew nothing until Matteson had finalized the deal.²⁸¹

White’s sense of humor is worth noticing too, when he said he was certain that Matteson was not “a timist,” and would not have “placed the closing period of the message thirty-three years distant.” By this he meant that no one should see Matteson’s acceptance of a 33-year loan as evidence that Matteson was putting off the second coming of Christ until that far in the future. Obviously, Matteson expected to pay for the property much more quickly than that. “But in order to accomplish this,” White continued, “our brethren in Northern Europe must have help from America.” White also expressed his conviction that the “Scandinavian brethren in this country will esteem it

²⁸⁰ *RH*, March 20, 1879, 92.

²⁸¹ *Ibid*.

their pleasure as well as their duty, to act a very liberal part for this mission, and, second, the American brethren, who take deep interest in all our mission, will give of *their* means to assist this also.”²⁸² Thus James White wholeheartedly supported Matteson and the Adventists of Norway.

Matteson’s Children Come to Norway

On January 9, the same year (1879), Matteson had expressed his desire to get his “children here.” He wanted to sell his home in Oakland, Wisconsin, and make Christiania his permanent home. He requested also that “Bro. Jasperson and Martin Olsen could come and assist” him. Matteson then “submitted this respectfully to” James White and “the Conference Committee.” James White’s response was quick and positive. He said: “We see no reasons why he [Matteson] should return to this country, therefore his entire family should be with him.” White also endorsed the plan of sending Jasperson and Olsen to Norway as well.”²⁸³

Five months later, on July 10, 1879, a ship arrived in Christiania bringing Christina, Samuel, Martha, Alexander, Daniel, and John to reunite with their father and mother after more than two years of separation. There was also sorrow and grief because they all missed Matilda, who had died of malaria in 1878.²⁸⁴

Jens and Maree Jasperson and Anna Rasmussen had arrived on the same ship. Jens Jasperson would assist Matteson in evangelism and Rasmussen would work in the

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ *RH*, February 13, 1879, 52.

²⁸⁴ *GV*, 86. See above in the section, “Matteson’s Arrival in Denmark.”

publishing house as a typesetter. Matteson had that summer (1879) bought a hand-press. A man named P. M. Hansen Klungland, who had joined Matteson “to become a colporteur,” also “operated the press,” assisted by Matteson’s son Samuel. All of Matteson’s children were involved with the publishing work.²⁸⁵ According to Chilson, Matteson “began campaigning for a cylinder press” soon after he started publishing *Tidernes Tegn* in 1879. Matteson “wrote enthusiastically to W.C. White” about his plan without getting the desired response. Chilson continued: “American church leaders were slow to share Matteson’s enthusiasm for a cylinder press. Rumor at Battle Creek had it that he lazily sat in Christiania with no zeal to pioneer elsewhere.”²⁸⁶

Time of Crisis

The historian Edwin Torkelsen suggests that “it is reasonable to ask the question how convinced the American leaders were when they expressed ‘sympathy and support’ for his [Matteson’s] work in Scandinavia.”²⁸⁷

Matteson had reached a crisis in his experience, perhaps partly because of his “presumptuous work” which characterized most of his life span. The work committed to him in Scandinavia had developed rapidly and independently due to the “strength of his will and determination.”²⁸⁸ The church was continually enlarging, and this growth in membership brought increasingly heavy burdens upon Matteson. No one man could

²⁸⁵Ibid., 86, 88; *ML* 240.

²⁸⁶GV, 88, 90.

²⁸⁷Edwin Torkelsen, *Ellen G. White og Norge* (Ellen G. White and Norway) 1885/1887–1987 (Røyse: Signum Forlag, 1988), 107.

²⁸⁸GV, 124, 128.

continue to bear these burdens alone, without imperiling the future prosperity of the church. There was necessity for a further distribution of the responsibilities which Matteson had borne alone. An important step had to be taken by laying upon others some of the burdens thus far borne by Matteson himself. However, it should be kept in mind that Matteson was a loner who preferred to be independent of others and work alone. Quite often his American leaders heard of his work in Scandinavia for the first time when they read about it in *Review and Herald*, as shown in the purchase of the building at Akersgaten 2. Such lack of direct communication caused problems for both parties, especially when it involved unforeseen expenses.

In 1880 Matteson still expressed, on the basis of what he understood as “jealousy and suspiciousness” towards him, much doubt whether he really was the right man to have sent to Scandinavia in the first place, because when he was in America he had found it very hard to work when viewed with suspicion. Suspicion, prejudice, and jealousy are never good company. Matteson may have felt that his liberty was in a measure restricted because of that, not just in Scandinavia, but also when he worked in America.²⁸⁹ A letter from John Loughborough may have strengthened Matteson’s misgiving and mistrust, and not without some supporting evidence. As Matteson was moving forward with his publishing work in Norway he got a letter from John Loughborough, which claimed to represent the view of the SDA General Conference and to have the support of Ellen G.

²⁸⁹Ibid.

White, instructing him to shut down the publishing house in Norway, to be replaced by a European Publishing House in England.²⁹⁰

The above-mentioned letter is indicative indeed of the fomenting crisis in 1880 in the Christiania SDA Church. On March 22, 1880, only two days before Loughborough wrote his letter to Matteson, Matteson wrote identical letters to Stephen Haskell, O. A. Olsen, A. B. Oyen, John F. Hansen, and August Rasmussen, which more or less amounted to a formal notice of resignation. Matteson said he wrote the letter to the above-mentioned names because of their great interest for the Scandinavian mission both in Europe and America, and so that they might be well informed about the actual facts regarding the present situation in these fields. Matteson thought it obvious that the Scandinavian mission could not succeed based on the way it had been supported and treated by the General Conference.

After Matteson had thoroughly thought through the matter and discussed it with his wife, he felt that due to the present circumstances, it was best for the furtherance of the work for him to withdraw from his position as a preacher for the Conference. He was, however, willing to continue his work until someone was found to replace him.

Then Matteson reminded them of how he had received only \$20 for the first four years after he commenced working for the SDA Church in August 1863. But he said he was grateful for the salaries he had received for the last ten years he had worked for the cause before leaving for Europe.

²⁹⁰John N. Loughborough to John G. Matteson, 24 March 1880, Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, MD.

Matteson then deplored the jealousy, suspicion, and reproach he had had to face, which made him wonder whether the General Conference should not send another missionary to Denmark in whom they had greater confidence.

Matteson summed up the main criticism launched by the General Conference by saying that they had characterized him as a man who “acted hastily” and “made unwise moves without waiting for advice.” Matteson humbly admitted to these character flaws in his personality, but stated at the same time that the General Conference had not always acted wisely regarding the Scandinavian mission. He then listed the following points of disappointment for himself and the church members in Christiania:

1. The SDA General Conference had not fulfilled the financial promises made in connection with the buying of the building at the building at Akersgaden 2, which had greatly disheartened the members.

2. The removal of Jaspersen from a successful work in Skien, Norway, to Denmark, without proper financial support, and then not even answering his letters was deplorable.

3. To promise a donation of \$50, and then not live up to the assurance given was disagreeable.

4. To advise Matteson to establish a publishing house in Christiania, and promise to support it by means and workers, and then to publicly state in the *Review* that Matteson has not chosen the wisest way to establish it, was unacceptable.

5. To talk highly about the work in Norway and Denmark and then accuse people of stealing from the treasury was pathetic.

6. Matteson thought that the disapproval of his concentrating his work too much

within Christiania itself was unfair since his outreach had included Drammen, Eidsvold, Skien, Tvedestrand, Arendal, Valø, Moss, Risør, and Flesberg in Numedalen. Christiania served also as an informal center for the work in Sweden and Denmark.²⁹¹

Then, in his own defense, Matteson listed some of his accomplishments for the SDA Church:

1. Before going to Europe, he had supervised some 800 Danish and Norwegian Adventists, in addition to other Adventists not of Scandinavian descent, in America.²⁹²
2. He had written books, tracts, and edited hymnbooks.
3. He had started *Advent Tidende*.
4. He had started *Tidernes Tegn*, and established a publishing house.
5. He had spent much time in evangelism.

Matteson then pointed out that while he was in Denmark no money had been transferred to him until his situation had brought him to the point of despair. He maintained that the situation had not changed much since then, because recently he had received \$300, which was to be divided between himself, the publishing house, and other workers like Jaspersen so that Jaspersen could buy some bread. Under such circumstances, Matteson thought it was absurd to accuse anyone of theft.

Matteson also suggested three things which he felt would enable him to continue his work and cooperation with his brethren: (1) permission to keep the publishing house and continue printing the paper *Tidernes Tegn*, (2) permission to work mainly in

²⁹¹ML, 245-250.

²⁹²Known in Wisconsin as “The Apostle Paul of the Adventists,” Matteson had planted a number of churches among rural Scandinavians. See *Dictionary of Wisconsin History*, s.v. “Adventists in Wisconsin,” 2010.

Christiania for the time being, because of the great interest there, and later to go to Denmark, Sweden, and other places in Norway,²⁹³ and (3) assurance of reasonable help so as not to despair once more and thus hinder the progress of the work. If these terms were unacceptable to the General Conference Committee then Matteson wanted to return to his farm in Wisconsin with his family, so that someone else could take over his work in Scandinavia.²⁹⁴ Nothing suggests that the core of Matteson's worries was inaccurate.

The Solution of the Crisis

The solution to the crisis of the Scandinavian mission in 1880 was brilliant. At the initiative of James White, the SDA General Conference invited Matteson to come to Battle Creek for a face-to-face talk instead of continuing the correspondence.²⁹⁵ And so he did. A Swedish cobbler and a convert of Matteson, Jonas Pehrson Rosqvist, from Grythytted, assisted by others (names unknown), took charge of the work in Christiania to free Matteson for the journey to America.²⁹⁶

Matteson left Norway in the autumn of 1880 to attend the annual General Conference session in the USA. The expansion of the publishing work and the launching of a health magazine were uppermost in Matteson's mind, but before pursuing such an

²⁹³These places were: Drammen, Eidsvold, and Lillehammer during 1879; Skien and Tvedestrand during 1880; Valø and Arendal during 1881; Moss during 1882; Risør, and Flesberg in Numedalen during 1883, etc. His work outside Christiania will be considered later in this chapter.

²⁹⁴John G. Matteson to Stephen Haskell et al., March 22, 1880, Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, MD.

²⁹⁵James White to John G. Matteson, March 18, 1880, April 7, 1880, Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, MD. During Matteson's stay in America Uriah Smith was the secretary of the General Conference Executive Committee and Mrs. M. J. Chapman was the treasurer.

enterprise he wanted the advice and preferably the consent of the General Conference Committee.²⁹⁷ “Once more I was in Battle Creek, Mich.,” Matteson reported. “My stay here was made as comfortable as possible at the Sanitarium. The brethren who were members of the General Conference were fortunately there. I had good opportunity to consult with them and present my plans for them. They were very interested in the publishing work and willing to help advance it.”²⁹⁸

During this meeting, Matteson proposed purchasing a cylinder press which he himself would finance. If it turned out to be a success, the General Conference could buy it later. At this time Matteson also suggested the publishing of a health magazine. He said that it was perhaps difficult for the brethren “to judge these things, since they did not know about the people and the circumstances in a country so far away.”²⁹⁹ The committee agreed to let Matteson implement these plans at his own risk. If they succeeded, the conference would buy both the press and the health magazine later. Dr. John H. Kellogg was so enthusiastic about the health paper that he gave Matteson \$120 immediately and promised to send him another \$100 when he actually began printing it.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁶*ML*, 227.

²⁹⁷*GV*, 91.

²⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 231.

²⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 231.

³⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 232.

Beyond the Crisis

In his autobiography Matteson portrays his trip to the headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a success, in spite of the fact that the General Conference did not grant the Norwegian mission any money to launch the two projects he had suggested, the purchase of a cylinder press and the publication of a health magazine. According to Matteson the response of the General Conference “should not be understood in such a way that the Conference did nothing to advance the work, since it did not give anything to start the two mentioned projects.” After all, Matteson argued, “they paid for my stay and travel expenses which enabled me to continue my work, without which I would not have been able to do so.”³⁰¹

On his return to Norway in 1881, Matteson bought a “second-hand cylinder press” for \$600. It was worn but for about \$30 worth of repairs, it could be “put in good running order” and “make nearly a thousand impressions in an hour.”³⁰² Also, as already noted, Matteson started in July 1881 the new health journal called *Sundhedsbladet* (The health paper). Because of this, canvassing and tract work increased considerably, Matteson reported. “In the year ending May 1st, 1890, the canvassers had sold religious and health publications in Norway, Denmark, and Sweden for nearly \$11,000.”³⁰³

Matteson organized on July 27, 1882, the Norwegian publishing house under the name Den Skandinaviske Forlags-og Trykkeriforening (The Scandinavian Publishing and

³⁰¹Ibid.

³⁰²John G. Matteson, *The Providence of God in Events Connected with the Life of J. G. Matteson* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1890), 264-268.

³⁰³Ibid.

Printing Association); later the name was changed to Den Skandinaviske Bokforlags (The Scandinavian Publishing House). Books and periodicals were printed for Sweden and Denmark, as well as for Norway.

Contrary to the gossip that Matteson “sat lazily in Christiania with no zeal to pioneer elsewhere,” he did preach primarily in Christiania during the winter, but during spring, summer, and fall he preached at other places.³⁰⁴ In 1879, besides conducting several public meetings in Christiania, Matteson organized the first SDA Church in Norway, launched the first SDA publishing house to be established outside North America, began to publish the *Tidernes Tegn* (Signs of the times), bought a large property, and held public meetings in Drammen, Eidsvold, and Lillehammer. He also assisted Jens B. Jaspersen and Jonas Pehrson Rosquist with their public evangelistic meetings in Skien. In the late summer of 1880, Matteson presented the Advent message at Tvedestrand. He “found unequaled prejudice” in this idyllic little town. After two open-air meetings, a Baptist farmer allowed Matteson to use his garden for public meetings, resulting in five new members. On August 28, 1880, Matteson, together with Jonas Pehrson Rosquist and Oluf Johnson, organized the first Seventh-day Adventist Church in Sweden at Gryhyttehed with a membership of 45 and P. Saxin as church elder. Earlier the same year (May 30, 1880), Matteson had organized the Denmark Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁴*Evangelists Sendebud*, no. 11, 1878, 21.

³⁰⁵*GV*, 91; *ML*, 245-249. Because of the opposition of the state church, early in 1882 Rosquist was forbidden to preach in Gryhyttehed anymore. When he continued to do so, he was arrested, tried, and sentenced to pay 50 kronor. Not willing to do this, he was thrown into jail, where for a period of eight days he suffered greatly from intense cold. The next year he immigrated to America, as did a number of the newly baptized SDA members in Sweden. See *SDAE*, 1996 ed., s.v. “Sweden.”

In 1881 Matteson held public meetings in Valø and Arendal, and started two new periodicals, *Sundhedsbladet* (Health Paper), already mentioned, and *Biblical Sermons* (a quarterly containing Matteson's public lectures).³⁰⁶ In 1882 Matteson began public outreach at Moss, Norway. He was assisted by one of the Brorson brothers. On March 12, 1882, eight delegates from the three churches in Sweden (Grythytted, Åmot, and Långbanshyttan), with a total membership of 88, met at Grythytted to organize the Swedish Conference. S. N. Haskell represented the General Conference. At that time J. G. Matteson was elected president, the headquarters were established at Grythytted, and Matteson, O. Johnson, and J. P. Rosquist were given credentials as workers in the conference.³⁰⁷

In 1883 Matteson worked at Øster Risør where some people had begun to keep the Sabbath. During the summer he was at Flesberg in Numedal where, besides lecturing, he translated the book *Life of Christ* by Ellen G. White. In 1884 Matteson went to Denmark to meet C. J. Butler and B. L. Whitney and to attend a conference session at Balsømagle, Sjælland. From Denmark they went to Christiania, Norway. Before Butler and Whitney left Norway, A. B. Oyen and E. G. Olsen and their families arrived to strengthen the work in Norway.³⁰⁸ In the spring of 1885, Matteson terminated his work in Norway and moved to Copenhagen, Denmark.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁶*GV*, 93; *ML*, 249.

³⁰⁷*ML*, 249, 251; *SDAE*, 1996 ed., s.v. "Sweden."

³⁰⁸*ML*, 251, 252.

³⁰⁹Matteson, *Providence*, 260.

Summary

Even before going to Scandinavia, Matteson had shown himself an able workman whose fruitfulness was well above average. Although he had given himself fully to his sacred calling as a preacher, writer, and publisher, he did not count himself worthy of the calling to become a missionary, and therefore suggested the name of O. A. Olsen for this missionary endeavor. Though he had never engaged in any business that would turn him aside from his great work, yet he had a hard time making up his mind. America had become his home. Here he had a house and a large, happy family. Should he leave all this behind? Was he being responsible if he did not go?

His life had been a sacrifice in behalf of people and the church. He had understood the gospel commission to be the great global missionary charter of Christ's kingdom. Would he limit that kingdom if he declined to go further than he had gone so far? Should he not go and give the invitation of mercy to the many in Scandinavia crying for someone to come and help them?

Finally, he and his wife decided to leave behind their earthly belongings, their family and friends, and most difficult of all, their seven beloved children. Only those who have experienced the same can understand the pain of parting from their children. Matteson felt, however, that these steps could not be compared to the sacrifice of Christ.

Matteson much appreciated James White's faith in him and support for him as he considered the call to go to Scandinavia as a missionary. Matteson recognized also and was very grateful for the full backing of the whole SDA General Conference, when he had his doubts as to whether he was the right man for such a great responsibility as this assignment entailed. He also was thankful for Stephen Haskell's good advice regarding such undertaking.

The travel from Battle Creek to New York City to Hamburg to Vejle was fairly pleasant and engaging. Having arrived as an answer to the sacred calling, Matteson and his wife knew that they would have to toil hard although the soil had been somewhat cultivated and prepared by Adventist literature. No sacrifice would be too great for presenting the great truth of the three angels' messages. Their zeal for the advancement of God's kingdom marked them as faithful subjects of the cross of Christ, because straight away they visited people in Jutland and Sjælland, and the islands. In record time Matteson had completed a hymnbook and commenced preaching and visiting individuals.

It is somewhat hard to understand why Matteson stayed only a year in Denmark since the harvest was fairly good and the opposition was not that hard. Perhaps the saying of Jesus Christ that "a prophet is without honor in his own country" (John 4:44 NEB) became true regarding Matteson's work in Denmark. In any case, Matteson had set his eyes on Christiania as the center for the work in Scandinavia, and it seemed there was no turning back from that goal.

Matteson's unique and unparalleled success in Christiania speaks for itself. If anyone was the right man at the right time, it seems to have been Matteson. In a relatively short time he had organized a church of 34 members on January 11, 1879, in Christiania; by June 7 the membership had increased to 38 members, and by the end of that year to 82 members. Matteson wrote and printed thousands of tracts during his stay in Scandinavia. In 1879 he started publishing *Tidernes Tegn*, bought a large real estate property the same year, and launched for Norway and Denmark the first SDA publishing house to be established outside North America. In 1881 he began publishing the health

and temperance journal *Sundhedsbladet*. In 1882 he gave the publishing house in Christiania to denominational ownership.

Matteson reached a crisis in his experience partly because the work committed to him was developing so rapidly. The swift growth in membership brought increasingly heavy burdens on him since he was more or less working alone. No one man could continue to bear the burdens of public preaching, writing, publishing, and caring for the members alone, without imperiling the prosperity of the church. An important step in distribution of responsibilities should have been taken much earlier and when steps were taken they were cut short. Even though Matteson was fairly independent, it was always his great desire to work in harmony with his brethren. Therefore he went to America for talks. James White's wise leadership found an interim solution to the crisis, though it was only a partial solution, since Matteson himself had to be financially responsible for future accomplishments of the church until they proved successful.

Matteson concluded his work in Christiania in 1885, the very year Ellen G. White visited Norway for the first time. Chapter 5 seeks to discover why Matteson left Christiania, which had been his choice for the center of the Scandinavian SDA mission.

CHAPTER 5

ELLEN G. WHITE'S THREE VISITS TO NORWAY

Ellen G. White: The Messenger of the Lord

To Seventh-day Adventists, Ellen G. White was much more than a unique woman, mother, standard-bearer of human rights and freedom of conscience, co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, counselor, lecturer, and voluminous writer; she was also the messenger of the Lord, the eschatological prophet of God. Seventh-day Adventists regard Ellen G. White as having received the spiritual gift of prophecy, so that her “writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth.” They do not believe, however, that “she was either verbally inspired or infallible.”¹

Her work is therefore inseparably linked with the origin and development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church during her lifetime. Since her death in 1915, her writings have continued to influence the denomination. For a sketch of her formative years, see Appendix E.

Her prophetic ministry began in December 1844, when she received the first of many visions. Based on those visions, she began a nurturing ministry to the scattered Adventists after the Millerite disappointment of 1844. James White, an Adventist

¹*Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1990), 28; Jerry Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1993), xiii.

minister whom she married in 1846, and Joseph Bates, a retired sea captain who had been a leader among Millerite Adventists, united with her to become the three co-founders of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, which was formally organized in 1863. As Joseph Bates aged, the administrative leadership passed to James White. To both of them, Mrs. White was a consultant and adviser, through the information she received in vision. She never held an official or elected position in the denomination, but was regarded as “the messenger of the Lord.”²

After the death of James White in 1881, she continued her ministry for another 34 years until her own death in 1915. From 1844 to 1884 she traveled almost constantly in the United States, building up the denomination through her public speaking, writing, and counseling to individuals, boards, and committees. From August 1885 through August 1887 she traveled extensively in Europe, visiting Adventist churches, convocations, conferences, and institutions in England, Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Italy, France, and Germany. Three times she visited Norway (October 30 to November 16, 1885; July 2-16, 1886; and June 9-22, 1887), exerting a formative influence on the Adventist denomination there.³

Throughout her ministry, she challenged her hearers that the great Protestant Reformation “*is to be carried forward to the close of time* by those who also are willing

²“Early in my youth I was asked several times, Are you a prophet? I have ever responded, “I am the Lord’s messenger. . . . My Saviour declared me to be His messenger.” Ellen G. White, “A Messenger,” *Review and Herald*, July 26, 1906; reprinted in Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 32.

³Delafield, 13-15.

to suffer all things for ‘the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.’”⁴ Thus she recognized the contributions of godly men and women who had earlier devoted their lives to the work of spiritual reform, and maintained that such messengers would be needed to the end of time.

The Need for Special Messengers from the Lord

In Mrs. White’s view, the Protestants of both America and Europe “were highly favored in receiving the blessings of the Reformation” of the sixteenth century, but they “failed to press forward in the path of reform. Though *a few faithful men* arose, from time to time, to proclaim new truth and expose long-cherished error, the majority were content to believe as their fathers [Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and others] had believed and to live as they had lived.” She continued:

Therefore religion again degenerated into formalism; and errors and superstitions which would have been cast aside had the church continued to walk in the light of God's word, were retained and cherished. Thus the spirit inspired by the Reformation gradually died out, until there was almost as great need of reform in the Protestant churches as in the Roman Church in the time of Luther. There was the same worldliness and spiritual stupor, a similar reverence for the opinions of men, and substitution of human theories for the teachings of God's word.⁵

Special messengers of the Lord were therefore greatly needed. As noted above, Mrs. White called them “a few faithful men.” Some of these men stood up, as we shall see, during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries to present spiritual and devotional piety as a reaction to the development of the Protestant and in particular the Lutheran scholastic treatment of the Scriptures. Church historian Williston Walker

⁴Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, 78, emphasis supplied. The Scripture quotation is from Rev 1:9.

⁵*GC*, 297, 298, emphasis supplied.

explains that although Protestantism was “based on Scriptures,” it eventually assumed the form of a “fixed dogmatic interpretation, rigid, exact, and upholding intellectual conformity” as the “sufficient elements of Christian life.” Thus the “vital relationship” between the believer and God, as Luther taught it, was largely replaced by a “faith” that consisted only in the intellectual acceptance of a dogmatic theology. The “general tendency” of scholasticism to view “external and dogmatic” concepts as the basis for Christian life and the right road to heaven made the “deeper piety” practically irrelevant. Protestant scholasticism had “unwittingly been influenced by the spirit of rationalism,” which it partly opposed but at least partly accepted, and thus it became a “dead orthodoxy” of sacramentalism, confessionalism, and endless theological disputes.⁶

Living faith in Christ’s death on the cross had been replaced by a dogmatic rationalism that could not produce the fruit of righteousness. Therefore the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, fulfilling the righteous claims of the law and making the guilty sinner righteous by faith, could no longer bring revival to the soul. Instead of the Holy Spirit quickening the moral powers of mind and heart, religion had become merely an intellectual exercise.⁷

As a reaction to this dead orthodoxy, a few men arose from time to time in the Protestant churches to emphatically advocate revival of the spiritual and devotional ideal—a resurrection from spiritual death and not just an intellectual change of theology, however much such a scholarly Reformation may also have been needed at times.

⁶Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* (T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1963), 444, 445.

⁷See also Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, vol. 2 (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1975), 731; Earle E. Cairnes, *Christianity through the Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1981), 381, 382.

The German Lutheran theologian Johann Arndt (1555-1621) undoubtedly belonged to the “few faithful men” mentioned by White. He wrote several influential books on devotional and spiritual Christianity and may be regarded as one of the founders of what became to be known as pietism. Arndt's principal work, *True Christianity* (*Wahres Christentum*, 1605-1610),⁸ was translated into most European languages and became the foundation of many books of devotion. In it, Arndt dwells upon the spiritual union between the believer and Christ by drawing attention to Christ's life *within* his people by the Holy Spirit, in order to correct the purely forensic side of the later reformation theology, which gradually paid almost exclusive attention to Christ's life and sacrifice *for* his people.

Another such man was Philip Jakob Spener (1635-1705) also of Germany and regarded as the founder of pietism. His followers were nicknamed Pietists. Spener repeatedly called attention to Arndt and his writings, especially to his book *True Christianity*. He himself is known for his book *Pia Desideria* of 1675 in which he pictured the chief evils of his time as “government interference, the bad example of the unworthy lives of some of the clergy, the controversial interpretation of theology, and the drunkenness, immorality, and self-seeking of laity.” He also “showed certain ascetic tendencies, like the English Puritans, including moderation in food, drink, and dress, and rejecting theater, dances, and cards, which contemporary Lutheranism regarded as ‘indifferent things.’”⁹

⁸Johann Arndt, *Wahres Christentum* (True Christianity), book 1 (1605) and books 2-4 (1606-1610).

⁹*Pia Desideria* (Pious desires) was originally written as a preface for a new edition of Johann Arndt's *True Christianity*. A little later the preface was published

August Hermann Francke (1663-1727) a Protestant religious leader, educator, and social reformer was also one of the principal promoters of Pietism. He was noted for his Collegium Philobiblicum, conventicles, Paedagogium, Latin School, and Orphan House. A devoted friend of Francke, Karl Hildebrand, or Freiherr von Carstein (1667-1719), established in 1710 Francke's Bible Institute.

English Puritanism also greatly influenced German Lutheran Pietism, especially through the book *The Practice of Piety* by Lewis Bayly (d. 1631). It was translated into seven languages including German. It strongly influenced Spener, as did also the writings of Richard Baxter (1615-1691).

In the Netherlands there was William Teelinck (1579-1629) who was called the Father of the Dutch "Further Reformation." Other Dutch Pietists, or Precisianists as they were also called, were Gisbert Voet (1589-1677) and Jodocus van Lodensteyn (1579-1677) to whom Johann Arndt was partially indebted.¹⁰

Pietism continued to spread in Germany, notably in Württemberg under the able leadership of Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752), a minister in the Lutheran Church, a celebrated biblical scholar and critic, and an advocate for individual freedom of conscience, who also preached the soon second coming of Christ.¹¹

separately as a book under its own title, *Pia Desideria*. See Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1964).

¹⁰Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), 444-446. See also Magnús Jónsson, *Saga kristinnar kirkju* (History of the Christian Church) (Reykjavík: Ísafoldarpretsmiðja, 1941), 355-359.

¹¹Magnús Jónsson, *Saga kristinnar kirkju* (Reykjavík: Ísafoldarpretsmiðja, 1941), 359. See also Johann Albrecht Bengel, *Sextio Uppbyggeligá Tal öfwer Johannis eller fastmer Jusu Christi Uppenbarelse*, Andra Delen (Götheborg, Swede: Samuel Norber, 1797), 433-456.

Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771-1824) was especially stimulated by the famous work of Johann Arndt and had some of the works of Johann Albrecht Bengel in his personal library, as already pointed out in chapter 1.

Although Pietism was a breach with the scholastic tendencies, it never broke with doctrinal Protestant understanding of the Bible as such, but wanted to see the fruit of the Holy Spirit rooted and blossoming in the everyday life of the believer. Pure doctrine together with a pure heart was the ideal of Pietism and was its true and only great goal.

Later “Pietists” or “Puritans” included the American theologian and Congregational clergyman, Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), whose sermons stirred the religious revival called the Great Awakening; the English theologian, evangelist, and founder of Methodism John Wesley (1703-1791); and the British evangelist and organizer of the Calvinistic Methodists George Whitefield (1714-1770). Ellen G. White was reared in a Methodist family only a few years after the death of Wesley.

Ellen G. White as a Pietist

Once, while Mrs. White was in Norway, John G. Matteson suggested that it would please the people more if she would “speak less about duty and more in regard to the love of Jesus,” that is, more about what Christ had done *for* man than what Christ desires to do *in* man, or more about the imputation of forensic justification, than about sanctification of mind and heart by the Spirit. A part of her answer reads as follows: “My work is to *elevate the standard of piety and true Christian life* and urge the people to put away their sins and be sanctified through the truth.”¹²

¹²MS 26, 1885, italics supplied.

Such an answer shows that Mrs. White saw herself in continuity with the “few faithful men” of Pietism who never questioned the redeeming power of the atonement of Christ, but who at the same time wanted to see the image of Christ formed within the believer. Pietism is a logical reaction to any dead orthodoxy in Christianity.

J. G. Matteson once wrote to Mrs. White concerning her work, that she “had the precedence” of all the workers in God’s vineyard and that she “had a richer supply of heavenly wisdom and love than the rest.”¹³ These words of Matteson may be used here to describe the more than 5,000 articles and forty books she wrote during her lifetime.¹⁴ Her emphasis on practical piety and true Christian living represents a culmination and consummation of the great movements of Pietism in Germany and Scandinavia, Precisianism in the Netherlands, Puritanism in England, and the Great Awakening and Millerism in America. In 1885 the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Christiania, Norway, was ripe for a visit of the Adventist “Messenger of the Lord,” the Pietist Ellen G. White. She made three visits to Norway, October 30 to November 6, 1885; July 2 through 16, 1886; and June 9 through 22, 1887.

¹³*IT*, 598.

¹⁴“Including compilations from her 50,000 pages of manuscript, more than 100 titles are available in English.” Arthur L. White, “Ellen G. White: A Brief Biography,” www.whiteestate.org (accessed Aug. 13, 2009).

Ellen G. White's First Visit to Norway

Events Preceding Her Arrival

In 1874 the Seventh-day Adventist Church sent J. N. Andrews to Switzerland as its first official missionary.¹⁵ From Switzerland, Seventh-day Adventist missionaries had gone to Germany in 1875, France in 1876, and Italy in 1877. As noted in chapter 4, the second official missionary, John G. Matteson, went to Denmark in 1877, to Norway in 1878, and to Sweden in 1880 together with John P. Rosqvist, one of Matteson's converts.

The 1881 session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists voted that S. N. Haskell "visit the various [Adventist] missions in Europe." Haskell's visit marked a "new era" in the history of the Adventist Church in Europe, because during his visit (in 1882) "the question was considered of having an organization which should bring together the workers of the various missions as often as once each year, for consultation concerning the general wants of the cause." In order to achieve this goal, a meeting was appointed for Basel, Switzerland, September 14-17, 1882, under Haskell's supervision. J. G. Matteson represented the Scandinavian field; J. N. Loughborough, A. A. John, and George R. Drew were present from the English Mission, and since the meeting was in Basel, the Swiss Adventists were also well represented. A "permanent organization was formed by the adoption of a constitution," and J. N. Andrews was elected chairman. This first meeting recommended that "such convocations to be held at least annually, from that time forward." The Council was supposed to meet again October

¹⁵Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:296.

19, 1883, but was postponed because of “the extreme feebleness” of the council’s chairman, Andrews, who died October 21, 1883.¹⁶

In the spring of 1884, George I. Butler, president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, then on a circular tour in Europe, chaired the second session of the European Council of Seventh-day Adventist Missions.¹⁷ The council convened in the new office of *Les Signes des Temps*, in Basel, Switzerland, from May 28 to July 1, 1884. Norway was represented by J. G. Matteson, E. G. Olsen, A. B. Oyen, and Lars Hansen.¹⁸ At the seventh meeting of this Second European Council the committee on resolutions presented the following:

Whereas, Experience has taught us that the personal labors of our dear Sister White are invaluable to the cause in accomplishing what her writings alone cannot accomplish; and –

Whereas, Our European brethren feel the greater need of these for having never been favored with them, and have a strong desire to see and hear Sr. White; therefore–

Resolved, That we extend to Sr. White a hearty and urgent invitation to visit the different fields in Europe as soon as practicable.¹⁹

On October 30, 1884, the General Conference at Battle Creek, Michigan, received a second request signed by B. L. Whitney, A. C. Bourdeau, and D. T. Bourdeau on behalf of the Committee of the Central European Mission:

¹⁶*HS*, 37, 39, 109.

¹⁷During this second session Article I of the constitution was amended to read: “This Council shall be called the European Council of the Seventh-day Adventist Missions.” See *SH* 110. The Council consisted of the the Scandinavian (Norway, Denmark, and Sweden) Field, the British Mission, and the Central European Mission (Switzerland, France, Germany, Romania, and Italy).

¹⁸George I. Butler, “Report,” *RH*, June 24, 1884, 413.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 414.

In behalf of our mission, in behalf of our brethren and sisters generally, whose wishes we know, and on our own behalf personally, we express our earnest desire that Sr. White may visit Europe, that the cause may share the benefits of her labors and of the precious light and instruction which the Lord so generously grants us through his servant.²⁰

To these requests she responded by saying that she “stood ready to go whenever God should indicate by unmistakable providence that such was” her duty.²¹

Concerning this, Arthur L. White said: “With this matter placed before the readers of the *Review* in the early summer, it was no surprise to Ellen White and her son when the memorial was read at the General Conference session and respective actions taken. This had a strong influence on Ellen White’s plans and work.” Encouraged by her son W.C. White, she “decided to act on the judgment of the General Conference, and start the journey” across the North American continent “in the heat of summer,” despite her fragile health, to attend the third session of the Central European Missionary Council of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to be held in Switzerland during September 1885.²² She said in her diary, “I was no longer uncertain, I would venture to go with the party across the plains.”²³ Then she remarked:

Although I had prayed for months that the Lord would make my path so plain that I would know that I was making no mistake, still I was obliged to say that God hangs a mist before my eyes. But when I had taken my seat on the cars, the assurance came that I was moving in accordance with the will of God. . . . The sweet peace that God alone can give was imparted to me, and like a wearied child, I found rest in Jesus.²⁴

²⁰*RH*, November 11, 1884, 712, 713.

²¹*Ibid.*

²²Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:288, 289; E. G. White, “Notes of Travel, from California to England,” *RH*, September 15, 1885, 577.

²³MS 16a, 1885.

²⁴Ellen G. White “Notes of Travel, from California to England,” *RH*, September 15, 1885, 577, 578.

She spent a few days in Battle Creek, Michigan, and South Lancaster, Massachusetts, counseling, preaching, and writing. On Friday, August 7, “at ten in the morning she left for Boston.” The S. S. *Cephalonia* was to sail for England the next day, and she wanted to get settled in her room on ship before the arrival of the Sabbath. She “accomplished this nearly.” She and her company “commenced the Sabbath with prayer.” White said: “The Lord seems very near, and I feel peaceful and restful.” The S. S. *Cephalonia* would be their “floating home for nearly eleven days” on their journey to the Old World. On arrival in England, July 18, White noted that “my health was much better than when we started. To me this was abundant evidence that I was in the path of duty.”²⁵

Wednesday, September 2, the party left London, crossed the English Channel to Calais, France, and reached Basel, Switzerland, “about six o’clock” the next morning. They were met by B. L. Whitney, who became president of the Swiss mission and the Central European Mission after the death of J. N. Andrews. Whitney was “accompanied by R. F. Andrews and Albert Vuilleumier.”²⁶

When Mrs. White entered the new publishing house in Basel, Whitney escorted her to the meeting hall. When she saw it, she remarked: “I feel that I have been here before.”²⁷ She was then taken to the pressroom. Entering it she said: “I have seen this press before. This room looks familiar to me.”²⁸ When she had greeted two young men

²⁵MS 16a, 1885; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:290; *HS*, 161, 162.

²⁶MS 16a, 1885; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:293.

²⁷*LS*, 282.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 282, 283.

at work she asked, “Where is the other one?” because she had “a message for him.”²⁹ Whitney explained that he had gone to town. Ten years earlier, January 3, 1875, in Battle Creek, Michigan, USA, Ellen White had seen, in vision, this publishing house and its pressmen. “Needless to say, this experience brought courage to the heart of Whitney and his associates involved in the work at Basel,” as well as to the other workers assembled at Basel for the third session of the Central European Missionary Council.³⁰

Ellen G. White’s Public Work in Christiania and Drammen, Norway

Mrs. White, her son W. C. White, John G. Matteson, and their mission party traveled by train to Norway and arrived in Christiania, the capital, about noon on Friday, October 30, 1885. A. B. Oyen and E. G. Olsen met them at the railway station and took them in a hired coach to Oyen’s home at Akersveien 2.³¹ Mrs. White was happy to stay at Oyen’s home in Christiania. Among friends who spoke her own language, she felt that she was “again in America, as it were” and could “do to them all the good we much desire to do.”³²

²⁹*LS*, 283.

³⁰Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 3:294.

³¹Matteson “Report,” *TT*, November 9, 1885, 176; *HS*, 207, 72. E. G. Olsen was a son of Andrew Olsen who emigrated to America in 1850 because of the Sabbath truth as told in chapter 1. A. B. Oyen and E. G. Olsen had come to Norway in 1884 at the request of the General Conference to assist in the Adventist publishing and evangelistic work respectively.

³²MS 27, October 31, 1885.

At the time of Mrs. White's arrival in Christiania, the old assembly hall belonging to the Seventh-day Adventist Church had been torn down and was being rebuilt. Matteson, then living in Copenhagen, wrote: "The work on the new building is progressing well and it will most likely be finished by New Year's time," that is, after the departure of Mrs. White and her party.³³ While the renovation was taking place, the church members gathered in the assembly hall of the Norwegian temperance society,³⁴ which seated about 300 persons. October 31, 1885, the day after Mrs. White's arrival in Norway, was a Sabbath, and she met with the church, which had then a membership of 119.³⁵ About 200 attended the divine service Sabbath morning, where Mrs. White spoke on practical piety from 1 Pet 4:13-17. She reported that all listened with great attention. About 100 assembled to celebrate the foot washing and the Lord's supper in the afternoon.³⁶

The same day, the Saturday edition of Christiania's leading newspaper, *Aftenposten*, advertised a public lecture by Ellen G. White:

Mrs. E. G. White who during the last 30 years has traveled all over the United States as a preacher, and has given religious and temperance talks in the greater cities to several thousands of listeners, and who is now on a tour in Europe, will give a

³³Matteson, "Report," *TT*, December 8, 1885, 190. The contractor in charge of the renovation, Lars Hansen, will be introduced later.

³⁴The assembly hall of the Norwegian temperance society in Christiania, *Godtemplarlosjen*, may be literally translated into English as the "Good Templars' Lodge," but it is not associated with any Masonic Lodge of similar name. See *HS*, 207.

³⁵*HS*, 207. The following Sabbath, November 7, 1885, the congregation admitted its 120th member, traveling bookseller Hellik Helliksen Strutten. *Menighedsbog for Den 1. Syvende-Dags Adventistmenighed i Kristiania* [Church Record for the first Seventh-day Adventist Church in Christiania] (no. 2 from 1888 onward), HASDA, Oslo.

³⁶*HS*, 207; *MS* 27, November 3, 1885.

religious lecture through an interpreter in the Great Hall of the Labor Society, Sunday, November 1, at 10 a.m. All are welcome.³⁷

Another leading newspaper in Christiania, *Dagbladet*, carried identical advertisements on October 30 and November 1.³⁸ The response was excellent. All seats were taken, people were also standing in the aisles or wherever there was space left, and a large number had to leave since there was no more room. An estimated 1,400 people were present.³⁹

Mrs. White spoke from John 3:1-3, presenting the riches of the grace of Christ as the full and final display of the love of God. She reported that she spoke with “great freedom and clearness” and that her audience “held perfect attention,” adding, “We hope this effort will not be in vain, but that through Christ’s help much good may be the result.”⁴⁰

Tuesday, November 3, she visited the Seventh-day-Adventist congregation in Drammen, about forty-five kilometers west of Christiania.⁴¹ Two newspapers, *Drammens Tidende* and *Drammens Blad*, advertised her meeting in Madame Andersen’s

³⁷*Aftenposten*, October 31, 1885, 3.

³⁸*Dagbladet*, October 30, November 1, 1885, 3.

³⁹*HS*, 207.

⁴⁰MS 27, November 3, 1885; *TT*, November, 1885.

⁴¹The SDA church in Drammen had been organized May 30, 1885, by E. G. Olsen, the son of pioneer Andrews Olsen introduced in chapter 1. This was the second Seventh-day Adventist Church to be established in Norway. At the time of Mrs. White’s visit, E. G. Olsen had been engaged in public outreach since October 19, 1884, but the Drammen church did not yet own its own building. See *HS*, 207.

Hall, in Bragernes of Drammen.⁴² The best hall available in Drammen was the beer-hall, which seated 700 people and was often used for balls and concerts. There was a gallery on both sides of the hall, but no platform and no pulpit. A substitute platform was made of six beer tables covered with a carpet thrown over it. On top of the six tables was another beer table which served as the pulpit. It had a light-stand. White had to climb on chairs and stools to get up on the makeshift platform. She remarked: "We doubt if the hall or the beer tables were ever put to so good use before." The meeting started at eight o'clock in the evening. Again people came out in large numbers. At the opening of the meeting the hall was packed. People filled all "the seats, the galleries, and all the standing room." White said: "I spoke to them of the love of Christ, and his life of sacrifice." She had chosen John 3:16 as the basis for her subject, on the love of the Father in giving his uniquely born son to save a lost humanity, and the faith in Jesus Christ that works by love and purifies the soul. Thus she clearly, powerfully, and with much freedom testified of her Redeemer's love and of his saving grace, holding the attention of her listeners to the very end.⁴³

The next morning, Wednesday, November 4, she returned to Christiania to hold meetings there Wednesday evening and Friday night, November 6. These meetings were held in Maribogadens Skole's (Maribo Street School's) gymnasium where Matteson had earlier held many meetings under less promising conditions.⁴⁴ The school's new owners might not even have been aware of Matteson's controversial lecture on hell seven years

⁴²*Drammens Tidende* (Tidings of Drammen), November 3, 1885; *Drammens Blad* (Paper of Drammen), November 3, 1885. The text of the announcement was the same as in *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* in Christiania.

⁴³*Ibid.*; *HS*, 207; MS 27, November 3, 1885.

earlier, December 29, 1878. Mrs. White's meetings were advertised in three newspapers: *Dagbladet*, *Aftenposten*, and *Morgenbladet*.⁴⁵ To her amazement 500 people responded and "listened with respectful attention" as she presented her topics based on Luke 10:25-29 and 2 Pet 1:1-13.⁴⁶

Invitation to Speak for the Norwegian Temperance Society

The Board of the Norwegian Temperance Society invited Mrs. White to speak on temperance at the Fortress Gymnasium.⁴⁷ The president of the society at that time was Dr. Oscar Nissen, who had been president of the Christiania Temperance Society since 1877.⁴⁸ In 1879 he was given the same responsibility for the whole of Norway and

⁴⁴*Dagbladet*, November 3, 1885, 3.

⁴⁵The advertisement in the *Aftenposten* simply announced: "Mrs. E. G. White will speak in the Maribo-Street School, Friday evening at 7:30." *Aftenposten*, November 5, 1885, 5. The *Dagbladet* gave more detail: "Mrs. White who spoke last Sunday in the Great Hall of the Labor Society to 1200 or 1400 people, will speak Wednesday evening at 8 o'clock and Friday night at 7:30 at Maribo-Street School." *Dagbladet*, November 3, 1885, 3.

⁴⁶*Dagbladet*, November 3, 1885, 3.

⁴⁷Mrs. White referred to the Fortress Gymnasium as "the soldiers' military gymnasium" and "the largest hall in the city." *HS*, 207.

⁴⁸Dr. Elias Gottlieb Oscar Egede Nissen was born in Tromsø, Norway, October 31, 1843. His father, Christian H. Nissen, was a medical doctor from Holstein, Germany. His mother was a descendant of the most famous Norwegian missionary to Greenland, often called the apostle to Greenland, Hans Egede (1686-1758). As a left-wing radical, Dr. Nissen participated in the Danish-German war of 1864 and again as a medical aide during the German siege of Paris in 1870. He joined the Norwegian Labor Party which was founded in 1887 and became the editor of the Party's newspaper *Social-Demokraten* (The Social-Democrat) from 1894 to 1896. He then served as the leader of the Labor Party from 1906 to his death in 1911. See A. W. Brøgger and Einar Jensen, eds., *Biografisk Leksikon* (Biographic Encyclopedia), vol. 10 (Oslo: H. Aschehoug & Co., 1949), 172, s.v. "Nissen, Elias Gottlieb Oscar Egede," by Fr. Grøn.

remained president of the Norwegian Temperance Society until 1887 when the society declined to support a ban on the use of alcohol.⁴⁹

In 1881, John G. Matteson began publishing the Norwegian health journal *Sundhedbladet* (Health Journal). By 1885 he needed a new medical editor. Because of that, the SDA publishing association had a board meeting on Monday, November 2, 1885, where W. C. White and H. W. Kellogg were present to discuss a successor to the present editor Dr. Berntzen. They agreed that Dr. Nissen would be an excellent replacement. Thursday, November 5, the board was informed that Dr. Nissen would be willing to accept the responsibility. He then served as *Sundhedsbladet's* medical editor from 1886 till 1890.⁵⁰ At least to begin with, A. B. Oyen did not support the choice of Dr. Nissen as editor, which on the other hand was supported by Larsen and Matteson.⁵¹

The appointment of Dr. Nissen as the medical editor of *Sundhedsbladet* suggests that he and Matteson must have known each other for a while and perhaps had even worked together since they had common interest in the temperance work. In addition they both carried the German name Gottlieb. This in turn may suggest why Dr. Nissen as the President of the Norwegian Teetotalers Society invited Mrs. White to lecture on temperance in the largest hall available in Christiania at that time. Someone must have made Dr. Nissen aware of her arrival in Norway and her great interest in temperance, since it was at Nissen's request that this large temperance meeting was arranged.⁵²

⁴⁹Per Fuglum, *Kampen om alkohol i Norge 1816-1904* (The fight over alcohol in Norway 1816-1940) (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1972), 321.

⁵⁰Karl Abrahamsen, *Norsk Bokforlag 100 år* (Norwegian publishing house 100 years) (Oslo: Norsk Bokforlag, 1997), 28.

⁵¹A. B. Oyen to W. C. White, November 23, 1885.

Ellen G. White's Grand Lecture on Temperance in Christiania

The temperance lecture took place Sunday, November 8, at 5 p.m. in the military gymnasium at the Akershus fortress, which was probably the largest available hall in the city at this time. It was advertised for three days in advance in four Christiania newspapers: *Aftenposten*, *Dagbladet*, *Morgenbladet*, and *Verdens Gang*. The advertisements were more or less identical. The following one from *Aftenposten*, Friday, November 6, serves as an example: "Mrs. E. G. White from California will give a temperance lecture Sunday, November 8, at 5 p.m. in the Fortress Gymnasium. On behalf of the Board of the Norwegian Teetotalers Society, A. Halvorsen, Secretary."⁵³

Present to hear the lecture were 1,600 to 1,700 people, the largest public audience White had during her two years of public ministry in Europe. The secretary of the temperance society, A. Halvorsen, introduced Mrs. White to the audience and A. B. Oyen was her interpreter. "An American flag was placed as a canopy above the pulpit; this was an attention which I highly appreciated," said Mrs. White. The audience included "a bishop of the State Church, with a number of the clergy." A "large proportion" of the crowd came from "the better class of society."⁵⁴

⁵²HS, 207-211.

⁵³*Aftenposten*, November 6, 1885, 3. See also *Dagbladet* and *Verdens Gang*, November 7, 1885; *Dagbladet* and *Morgenbladet*, November 8, 1885. The same advertisement appeared in the following newspapers: *Aftenposten* again, Saturday, November 7, and in *Verdens Gang* and *Dagbladet*. Sunday, November 8, it was in *Dagbladet* and *Morgenbladet*. *Verdens Gang* (The way of the world, or, The course of the world) is generally known as *VG*.

⁵⁴HS, 207; Delafield, 122.

The biblical content of her presentation on temperance took the audience by surprise. She reported afterward that “the people were expecting a regular campaign address full of statistics and stories about the crusade; and when they saw that the subject was to be argued from a Bible stand-point, they were at first astonished, then interested, and finally deeply moved.”

Her opening words directed the attention of the audience to “a religious stand-point” by referring to Adam and Eve’s experience in the Garden of Eden when they were overcome by the indulgence of appetite, and to Jesus Christ when he conquered the onslaught of temptations on the point of appetite in the wilderness, and to Nadab and Abihu whose example was a warning to all who “minister in holy things” whether they are pastors, lawgivers, judges, or other public servants. She clearly showed that it is man’s duty to live a life of self-denial, teetotalism, and temperance, keeping the passions under the control of reason, thus preserving the physical and mental powers in a healthy condition. She maintained that firm self-control in all things means the unflagging zeal of strict temperance.⁵⁵

Although her hearers had at first been astonished, their interest increased as she went along. She recalled that at times “they looked as solemn as if attending a funeral,” showing no “smiles,” neither was there was any boisterous “merriment” or “stamping of feet.” All seemed deeply moved by her one-and-one-half hour lecture.⁵⁶

After the lecture, Dr. Oscar Nissen thanked her for the “excellent lecture” and reminded the audience of the close connection between religion and the temperance

⁵⁵*HS*, 207-211.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*

movement in America, and attributed its great prosperity to this fact. He then encouraged “the ladies to join the temperance movement. They could be more effective than men.” He then introduced her to some of the leaders of the temperance movement in Norway. Many more came forward to thank her. Dr. Nissen himself was eager for Mrs. White to give more lectures on temperance, but she declined because of the compelling need of her advice for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Christiania.⁵⁷

Two newspapers carried reports of her lecture. *Morgenbladet* reported that “an American lady, Mrs. E. G. White, had given a lecture on temperance in the Fortress Gymnasium where quite a numerous audience had been present.” The paper reported that White had emphasized the need for mothers to teach their children to subject themselves to strict temperance even at a tender age, because it would give them resolute willpower and a stable character. “The mother moves the world and provides the onward movement of humanity with direction as she moves the little cradle in which the small citizen lies.” The article also pointed out how drunkenness destroys manhood, according to White, and that the only way back was through absolute temperance and God’s help to restore the strength of the nerves, the firmness of the will, and sound judgment.

The *Morgenposten*’s report was similar to the one referred to above, emphasizing the role and responsibility of mothers and that they should join the temperance society to help fight drunkenness, even in their own homes. According to the report, White said there was only one way to become a free man again. Only through strict temperance

⁵⁷*Morgenbladet*, November 10, 1885, 2; MS, November 6, 1885; HS 211.

would it be possible to regain the power and strength of manhood both physically and spiritually.⁵⁸

Lewis Harrison Christian⁵⁹ described Mrs. White's meeting at Fortress Gymnasium as it was told to him by a Norwegian Methodist pastor present at the lecture. The pastor told Christian that the fact that an American lady was coming to Norway to lecture was news. That she was a godly person lecturing on temperance was also remarkable, and that she titled her topic "Temperance in the Bible" was still more unusual. At this time temperance was viewed as something which should only concern the politicians, the police, and the prisons, but not the Bible. When people saw Mrs. White some whispered: "What does this little lady know about temperance?" "How many will be able to hear her in this large hall?" But only a few minutes after she commenced lecturing, people were impressed with her voice, her deep and spiritual enthusiasm, and her sound common sense. Never had this audience listened to such a practical and convincing presentation on the subject of temperance. All listened attentively to her motherly appeals to mothers and fathers to make sure their homes were pure, since their bodies were as holy as a temple for God. She especially encouraged the husbands to protect their wives and children from the effects of excessive, immoderate, intemperate, and impure habits. So impressed was the Methodist pastor that he felt she had conquered the whole audience. He said that after the lecture, one of the prominent men suggested

⁵⁸*Morgenbladet*, November 10, 1885, 2.

⁵⁹L. H. Christian was president of the European and Northern European Divisions of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, from 1920 to 1936. He came to Europe for the first time in 1903.

that this noble mother from America should be thanked for the best speech they had ever heard concerning how to be and what to do.⁶⁰

That remarkable speech of November 8, 1885, climaxed Mrs. White's public work in Norway at this time. After devoting much time mainly to public speaking during her first week in Norway, she now turned her full and undivided attention solely to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Christiania.

Challenges Facing the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Christiania

During her first week in Christiania, Mrs. White gave full consideration to the problems of the SDA Church there, documenting her observations in her manuscripts and diaries.⁶¹ Her perspective on these problems was not shared by Matteson, nor had any of these problems been reported in any of Matteson's articles in the *Review and Herald*, *Advent Tidende*, *Tidernes Tegn*, his autobiography, or other books about him. Since the previous chapter was based on such sources, little could be said about the problems within the church before her arrival.

Most of Matteson's public lectures and some of his sermons were advertised in local newspapers with titles descriptive of the subjects he chose to present. A careful look at the topics reveals that his main emphasis was on subjects appealing primarily to the

⁶⁰Lewis Harrison Christian, *The Fruitage of Spiritual Gifts* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1966), 167.

⁶¹The following documents serve as the main basis of the subsequent presentation. MS 3, 1885, contains the full text of White's all-important sermon in Christiania, Norway, November 7, 1885, and mentions other services she conducted. This pivotal sermon became the basis for the description of the problems in the SDA church in Christiania, as given in *HS*, 215-219. Mrs. White's diary in MS 27, 1885, also refers to the sermon and other services.

intellect. The following titles ran in the newspaper *Morgenposten* from October 24 to December 29, 1878. These were the first subjects presented by Matteson after he settled in Norway: (1) The second coming of Christ; (2) Authority of Scriptures; (3) God's saving grace; (4) Prophecies of Daniel concerning the four great powers; (5) The inheritance of the saints—the new earth; (6) The first Adam and the second Adam; (7) Prophecies of Daniel concerning the judgment and the papacy; (8) Introduction to Christ's beatitudes; (9) The sanctuary and the 2300 prophetic days in Dan 8; (10) The millennium—God's word or fantasy? (11) Thousands of angels; (12) American spiritualism and magnetism (knocking spirits)—and highlights from 22 years of experience in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, and Michigan; (13) Prophecies of John—the great dragon and God's church; (14) The man of sin and the first beast; (15) The seven prophetic churches—Rev 2 and 3; (16) The seven seals of Revelation; (17) The song of Israel in the first resurrection; (18) The soul and spirit of man—What is it? What does the Bible say? (19) Hell, Hades, and Gehenna, or the place of punishment—What and where is it? What does the Lord say? (20) Life and immortality; (21) Modern theories criticized—the word of God will triumph: he that has an ear, let him hear; (22) You will know the truth and the truth will set you free, John 8:23; (23) The punishment of the ungodly, the origin of the devil, the fall and wretchedness, the eternal suffering—the worm which does not die and the fire which cannot be quenched, and the restoration of all things.⁶²

⁶²*Morgenposten*, October 24, 26, 29, 31, 1878; November 2, 5, 7, 9, 10 14, 16, 23, 28, 30, 1878; December 3, 5, 7, 10, 12, 14, 17, 19, 21, 24, 28, 1878.

A survey of Matteson's topics presented from January 4, 1879, to April 3, 1880, shows that his approach to and presentation of biblical knowledge was a subject in and of itself.⁶³ While a few of these topics clearly focused on personal Christian experience, many of them could have encouraged a purely doctrinal and intellectual interest in biblical beliefs and prophecies. Knowledge about these subjects does matter, but depending on how it is presented, it may or may not touch the audience spiritually. As a subject, biblical knowledge may easily be used essentially to obtain an entrance into the church or even as a kind of an examination to get a baptismal diploma of acceptance as a Christian. This mighty man of God seems to have lost somewhere along the way the perception of the fact that the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ is the forgiveness of sin which has to come first, then true godliness, and then edifying worship. Mrs. White complained that she hardly found any godliness or true worship in his church in Christiania.

Martin Luther once said: "This one and firm rock, which we call the doctrine of justification, is the chief article of the whole Christian doctrine, which comprehends the

⁶³Based on advertisements in *Morgenposten* during this time: January 4, 7, 9, 11, 14, 16, 18, 21, 23, 25, 28; February 1, 4, 6, 8, 11, 13, 15, 18, 20, 22, 25, 27; March 1, 4, 6, 8, 13, 15, 22, 27, 29; April 3, 5, 8, 12, 17, 19, 24, 26; May 1, 3, 8, 10, 17, 24; June 7, 14, 21, 28; July 5, 8, 12, 15, 19, 26; August 2, 9, 16, 23, 30; September 6, 13, 20, 28, 30; October 4, 11, 18, 25; November 1, 8, 15, 22, 29; December 6, 9, 13, 16, 18, 20, 23, 27, 30, 1879. January 3, 6, 8, 10, 13, 17, 20, 24, 31; February 3, 5, 7, 10; March 7, 9, 13, 16, 20, 23, 27; April 3, 1880. During this time Matteson spoke sixty-five times on prophecies, eleven times on the law and the Sabbath, ten times on the life and death question, nine times about the apostle Paul, perhaps ten times about the gospel, during Christmas 1879 he spoke on Christ's nativity, and during Easter of 1880 he spoke on the last days of Jesus Christ's earthly ministry.

understanding of all godliness.”⁶⁴ Luther also said concerning the doctrine of justification or righteousness by faith, that if “this doctrine be lost, then also the doctrine of truth, life, and salvation, is also lost and gone. If this doctrine flourish, then all good things flourish; religion, the true service of God, the glory of God, the right knowledge of all things which are necessary for Christian man to know.” Luther also said that besides the “excellent righteousness of faith,” there is “another righteousness, called the righteousness of the law, or the ten commandments, which Moses teacheth. This we do also teach, but after the doctrine of faith.”⁶⁵ Luther used the analogy of the tree to explain the sequence of salvation by faith. A tree must first become “good” by removing its impurities from within by the forgiveness of Jesus Christ, then and only then, the “fruit” of godliness or sanctification will follow.⁶⁶ Luther also said that it was possible to sort of have the gospel without walking “uprightly according to the gospel.”⁶⁷ When the Reformation of the sixteenth century lost this biblical knowledge, dead intellectual orthodoxy followed. The goal of Pietism was to revive this knowledge. As John Arndt put it,

Not the Christian name, but a Christian life, shews a true Christian: let this therefore be the care of a true Christian, that in him Christ may be manifested, and made visible to others, by charity, humility, and benignity of nature. In whom Christ

⁶⁴Here quoted in Herbert J. A. Bouman, “The Doctrine of Justification in the Lutheran Confessions,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 26, no. 11 (November 1955): 801.

⁶⁵Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, trans. John Prince Fallows (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1979), xi, xii.

⁶⁶Martin Luther, *Forklaring av Davids 51. Salme* (Explanation of Psalm 51 by David) (Oslo, Norway: Luther Forlag, 1975), 180.

⁶⁷Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, trans. John Prince Fallows (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1979), 61.

lives not, he, of consequence, is not Christian. And this life having fixed its roots within, the very spirit and heart of a man must spring from this inward principle, as an apple from the internal virtue of the tree. Yea, it is necessary our life should be directed by the Spirit of Christ and fashioned after his example.⁶⁸

Both Luther and Arndt greatly influenced Hans Nielsen Hauge, as was stated in chapter 1. Hauge had prepared the soil for Matteson, but Matteson did not see that. If he had seen that, things might have had a much better start in Christiania.

The apostle Paul seems to have faced rather similar problems with the Christians at Corinth and therefore cautioned them against too high an esteem of their intellectual knowledge, producing such an effect that he could not speak to them “as to spiritual men.” Such “knowledge makes arrogant,” said Paul, “but love edifies” (1 Cor 3:1; 8:1, NAS). He also said to them: “If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know,” because even if a man has “*the gift of prophecy*,” and knows “all mysteries and all knowledge” and even has “all faith, so as to remove mountains, but does not “have love,” he is “nothing” (1 Cor 8:2; 13:2, NAS). Thus pure intellectual knowledge may fill a person with pride and self-importance (13:4). The superiority of love to mere theoretical knowledge is very obvious with Paul (13:13). A high conceit of intellectual knowledge alone may do no good, not even to oneself, and in many instances hurts others. But true love and tender regard for others bring happiness and unity.

The importance of the intellect is unquestionable, but to isolate the intellect from spiritual understanding has severe consequences. A purely intellectual presentation of

⁶⁸John Arndt, *True Christianity: Or, the Whole Economy of God Towards Man and the Whole Duty of Man Towards God*, books I and II, trans. Anthony William Boehm (Boston, MA: Lincoln & Edmands, 1809), 185.

biblical knowledge, in which the spiritual nature of man is never engaged at all and the power of spiritual knowledge, i.e., love, is not felt, the listener is deprived of his right and opportunity to engage his will or spiritual interest which might lead him or her to actions against the ill in oneself or any given community, large or small. It is even possible to preach around the gospel and say things about it without ever presenting it. By presenting intellectual biblical knowledge alone, the talk of doctrine becomes enough in and of itself, and lifeless and blind orthodoxy may be mistaken for faithfulness and fruitfulness. Thus orthodoxy alone, without spiritual life, only camouflages the existing spiritual death.

Matteson was always busy and lived for what he did, as has been shown in previous chapters. His evangelistic zeal was unequalled, but such activism may create a false view of knowledge. Since the Christian or Adventist knowledge presented by Matteson did not produce the character of a loving and loveable Christian, because it appealed primarily to the intellect and not to the spiritual nature of the mind, it may be likened to the historical “dead orthodoxy.” To know God is, of an imperative necessity, to love him, “for God is love” (1 John 4:8).

According to Mrs. White, as will be shown later, the main cause of the problems in the SDA Church in Christiania was the negative influence of the character deficiencies of its leaders, especially of John G. Matteson, but also of Lars Hansen, because they were not men of deep prevailing spiritual earnestness. Their shortcomings had to do with their lack of practical and devout Christianity. The result was that their attitude to others was one of superiority. But as men arrogate unto themselves position, they thereby not only betray others, but themselves as well. Matteson in particular had great argumentative

abilities as a preacher, writer, and a leader, but limited awareness of spiritual things. As the main leader, Matteson became more or less the standard of all things said and done. Since Matteson demanded largely an intellectual conformity to a fixed dogmatic interpretation of Scriptures, it also led to an external, crippling, and injurious observance of the seventh-day Sabbath. Mere cognitive or intellectual agreement on doctrine, therefore, largely constituted the sufficient elements of Christian life and worship in his church.

The so-called one-idea fanaticism, which also stemmed from the above-mentioned “dead orthodoxy,” resulted also in a limited spiritual understanding not only of the gospel, but also of the Ten Commandments. Therefore some fanatics in their enthusiastic spiritual blindness maintained that it was breaking the second command of the Decalogue if one had photographs of relatives hanging on the wall. Others thought it was wrong to travel on the Sabbath either by train or coach or horse in order to attend church. Adolph B. Oyen was criticized for traveling by train to Drammen on the Sabbath to preach there. During her visit to Christiania, Mrs. White herself was criticized for arriving at church in a carriage. Some held that it was even wrong to take offerings on the Sabbath during the divine service, since it represented work.⁶⁹

Mutual relationships of the church members were also marred by a purely intellectual and doctrinal interest in truth and knowledge, where reasoning powers were made an end in and of themselves. Peter Gay pointed out “the impotence of reason before passion, were, after all, themes that haunted the Enlightenment.”⁷⁰ If the philosophers of

⁶⁹HS, 211-215.

⁷⁰Peter Gay, *The Science of Freedom*, vol. 2 of *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), 188.

the Age of Reason recognized that the reasoning powers alone could not control the emotions of human nature, it is certainly to be expected that a preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ should also recognize that principle, because the goal and fruit of the gospel is the re-creation of man in the loving and loveable image of Christ. Matteson's purely intellectual and doctrinal approach had therefore hindered the actualization of living faith within the minds of his church members. Active virtues had not been cultivated. Hardly any divine new birth or conscious conversion had taken place. Hence there were plenty of censorious judgments. There were those who talked of themselves in a boastful way, which was disgusting to intelligent and sensible people. No one, not even the leaders, had the wisdom or the courage to resist this evil, because of the cold intellectual conformity which, as already mentioned, consisted largely in the acceptance of a dogmatic system of belief recommended by *the* leader. White commented: "Evil-speaking is a twofold curse, falling more heavily upon the speaker than upon the hearer. He, who scatters the seeds of dissension and strife, reaps in his own soul the deadly fruits. The very act of looking for evil in others develops evil in those who look. By dwelling upon the faults of others, we are changed into the same image."⁷¹

Thus the church was declining both spiritually and ethically. And since neither Matteson nor Hansen saw the need for spiritual change in themselves, they hindered others from making the spiritual change which was necessary for the prosperity and growth of the church, as Mrs. White saw it. She said that mere position never gives character to the man, but "a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually" by "conformity to God's revealed will always increases faith and knowledge" and maintains

⁷¹GW, 479.

a much needed balance of intellectual and spiritual knowledge of revealed biblical enlightenment.⁷²

Ellen G. White's Analysis of the Situation of the SDA Church in Christiania

Mrs. White's analysis of the situation of the Christiania Seventh-day Adventist Church was serious indeed: Like the church in ancient Corinth, the members in Christiania were involved in jealousy, strife, and partisan conflict (1 Cor 3:3). White wrote: "There are precious talents in the church in Christiania, but God could not use these brethren until they were converted. There were some who had the capabilities to help the church, but who needed first to set their own hearts in order." This, she felt, had led some into a "conscientiousness that will carry everything to an extreme." The fanatics and extremists gave the impression that the message of the church was "unkind, uncourteous, and unchristian in character." She went on to say that "God is not pleased with his people in this place, because they have belittled his holy requirements, striving to bring his law into subjection to themselves, rather than bringing themselves in subjection to the law." She therefore added: "The church at Christiania has not a twentieth part of the influence they might have possessed, if they had rightly improved their opportunities and privileges."⁷³

Her closer analysis of the situation maintained that a few were seen as "fanatics and extremists," full of "criticism, fault-finding, and dissension." Then there were those who made their ideas of "dress of first importance" and condemned "everyone who did not exactly meet their ideas." There were also "one-idea men" who "condemned pictures,

⁷²*FLB*, 287, 288; *GW*, 388.

urging that they are prohibited by the second commandment, and that everything of this kind should be destroyed.” These individuals went even so far as “claiming to have been sent with a message condemning pictures,” and even “clocks which had figures, or pictures upon them.”⁷⁴

“In the Sabbath meetings,” said White, “when all should be individually engaged in the worship of God, an accusing spirit is allowed to come in, and one bears testimony against another.” White thought that there “was no more effectual hindrance” to growing in grace than this “wide-spread” gossip, criticism, fault-finding, and condemnation of others. White compared this class with those of the Pharisees to whom Jesus said: “Ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God” (Luke 11:42). In this connection White applied the divine principle of freedom of conscience. “God would not have them depend on any man to be conscience for them.” “They should not endeavor to be conscience for their brethren and sisters.” Some imagined that it was their “duty to be church tinkers” by seeking “spot and stain in others,” thus becoming “narrower and narrower in their ideas, until they are ready to make one an offender for a word.” White thought that those who “continued to cherish a querulous, faultfinding disposition” should not “be permitted to remain in the church to prevent unity and destroy usefulness. Let them be reproved, and if they do not change their course, let them be separated from the church.”⁷⁵

⁷³HS, 211, 212, 215.

⁷⁴HS, 211, 212.

⁷⁵HS, 212-214.

Ellen G. White's Analysis of the Sabbath Problem in Christiania

According to Mrs. White, men in “responsible positions” had not by their “words and example” led the people of the church “to correct views and practices” regarding the holiness and observance of the seventh-day Sabbath of the fourth commandment. She lamented that “the blessing of God could not rest upon this church until there was a reformation upon this point.”⁷⁶

White also said: “The world is the instrument that sifts the church, and tests the genuineness of its members. The world holds out inducements, that, when accepted, place the believer where his life is not in harmony with his position.” This led some of the brethren in leading positions in the church to engage in “business” on the Sabbath so that they could not keep the “Sabbath according to the commandment.” They may have been Sabbath-keepers “outwardly,” but their thoughts were not kept “from business matters,” making them, in the Lord’s sight, transgressors.⁷⁷

Then there were those who sent their children to school on the Sabbath, although they “were not compelled to do this” by the school authorities. Some parents tried to justify their course by quoting the words of Christ, that “it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day.” “But the same reason would prove that men may labor on the Sabbath because they must earn bread for their children,” commented White, and if one follows this line of reasoning, there would be “no limit, no boundary line, to show what should and what should not be done.” She herself maintained a clear distinction between necessary and unnecessary work on the Sabbath: “Divine mercy has directed that the sick

⁷⁶*HS*, 215.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*

and suffering should be cared for; the labor required to make them comfortable is a work of necessity, and no violation of the Sabbath. But all unnecessary work should be avoided.” Some members of the church had given up observing the Sabbath for fear they could not support their families. “But here is just where the test is coming,” said White, “whether we will honor the law of God above the requirements of men.”⁷⁸

Ellen G. White’s Presentation of the Sabbath as a Specific Test from God

Both Mrs. White and John Matteson shared the belief that the three angels’ messages of Rev 14 predicted and defined the Seventh-day Adventists’ mission to the world. According to this understanding, the great advent awakening, especially in America in the 1830s and 1840s, came about as a result of the first angel's message which warned of the approach of the hour of God's judgment. This message was linked with the proclamation of the expected soon second coming of Jesus Christ. The second angel's message began as a special warning to the Christian churches which had rejected the proclamation of the first angel's message in 1843. They understood the third angel's message as warning of an attack on God's immutable law of Ten Commandments, and especially the Fourth Commandment, which brings to view the Sabbath as the covenant sign of God as Creator and Redeemer. Seventh-day Adventists understood the third angel’s message as not only following but including the first two messages. Hence, although these messages had their initial sounding in the 1830s and 1840s, they continue to be vital and relevant until Christ’s second coming. “Christ is coming the second time, with power unto salvation,” wrote Mrs. White. “To prepare human beings for this event,

⁷⁸*HS*, 216-218.

He sent his first, second, and third angels' messages. The angels represent those who receive the truth, and with power open the gospel to the world."⁷⁹

There is no question that both Matteson and Mrs. White shared this view of Rev 14. But in her view, Matteson had lost sight of the sacredness, priority, and urgency of the message, as well as God's high expectations for those who accepted it. Thus Mrs. White felt it necessary to reemphasize this message to the Christiania congregation. Mrs. White regarded the "third angel's message" as a special "test" in modern times and that this test is "a mark placed upon God's people, and that mark is the keeping of his holy Sabbath." This is not like "man-made tests" such as an "article of dress worn" or condemning "pictures." This is "God's test," comparable to the "door-post with the blood" of the lamb upon it, that protected the Israelites from the destroying angel the night before the Exodus.⁸⁰

She also pointed out that "the seal of God cannot be placed upon" those who "make the Sabbath a common day," since "the fourth commandment alone of all the ten contains the seal of the great lawgiver, the Creator of heaven and earth."⁸¹ Therefore, "true observance of the Sabbath is the sign of loyalty to God," and thus the "mark placed upon God's people . . . is the keeping of his holy Sabbath." The sealing of God's people is closely connected to the work of the Holy Spirit. The sealing in the forehead of the people of God "is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both

⁷⁹*GC*, 299-342; 355-390; 433-460; *BC*, 7:978, citing E. G. White, Letter 79, 1900.

⁸⁰*HS*, 212, 215, 217; Exod 12:7-13.

⁸¹*HS*, 217.

intellectually and spiritually, so that they cannot be moved.”⁸² This is the work of the Holy Spirit.

When Sabbath-keeping is viewed in the light of the above understanding, it is logical why Mrs. White was so worried about the “generally” low-grade of Sabbath observance “in these kingdoms” (i.e., Denmark, Sweden, and Norway), and especially since she regarded Christiania as “the great center of the work for the Scandinavian people.” This is the more comprehensible since she believed the Sabbath will become the final test of God “which will distinguish between those who serve God and those who serve him not; and upon this point will come the last great conflict of the controversy between truth and error.” “Here is where we prove our loyalty,” she emphasized. And those who have the wrong mark on them will not receive the “seal of God,” but “will perish with the wicked when his judgments are visited upon the earth.”⁸³

Ellen G. White Addresses the Problems in Christiania Directly

At the time of Mrs. White’s stay in Norway, not only was the spiritual climate of the church rather disagreeable, but so was the cold, foggy, and rainy November weather in Christiania as well. In spite of that, she devoted her time and energy exclusively to the members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Christiania from Sabbath morning, November 7, to the end of her stay Monday morning, November 16, except for her temperance presentation on Sunday, November 8, as described above.

⁸²*BC*, 7:981, citing *MS* 63, 1899, and *HS*, 217; *BC*, 4:1161, citing *MS* 173, 1902.

⁸³*HS*, 215-219.

The very opening words of Mrs. White's sermon that Sabbath forenoon, November 7, reminded her audience of her claim to be a special messenger of the Lord. "My mind has been burdened in regard to the condition of the church in this place. When the mission fields in this country were opened before me, I was shown that many things in every branch of the mission needed a different mold."⁸⁴

White wanted the church to become a conscientious community of Christians who not only believed intellectually that the seventh day of the week was the Sabbath of the Lord, but who actually kept it holy. But what the members apparently did not know is that it takes a holy person to keep the Sabbath holy. She wanted them therefore to exercise their faith guided by firm principles that would lead them in an opposite direction from the world. She wanted them to see the loveliness in Christ and the attractions of his truth. They had to understand that spiritual things are spiritually discerned and that without spiritual discernment they would be unable to see the claims of God upon them, or to realize their obligations to the Master whom they claimed to serve. She therefore went straight to the core of the problem by saying: "One matter has troubled me exceedingly; that is your manner of keeping the Sabbath."⁸⁵

As she continued her sermon, she urged the church that the real test of end-time allegiance to God would not be their trivial homemade tests, but the sanctified and spiritual observance of the eternal Sabbath of the Bible. The contest was between the commandments of God and the commandments of men. They were to defend the law of God and not make it void by the laws of their own, as the Pharisees of old had done. She

⁸⁴MS 3, 1885.

⁸⁵MS 27, 1885, Diary for November 7, 1885.

went on to say pointedly that some among them who “teach the word,” were by their example causing church members to disrespect the claims of the Sabbath commandment. As a result, many thought it was enough “to believe the truth” without being “sanctified through it.”⁸⁶

Further in her sermon, she addressed the issue of sending children to school on the Sabbath, which was especially egregious because it was not even legally required. Some schools, however, were reluctant to accept students who did not attend the school six days a week, and for this reason, some Adventists sent their children to school on the Sabbath. Mrs. White cited Abraham as an example of a good father who commanded his household after him to keep the way of the Lord. She also referred to the Exodus of the Israelites who left Egypt in order to serve the Lord and worship him on the Sabbath. As the blood of the lamb on the doorposts of the Israelites then was a sign of their loyalty and obedience, so the keeping of the Sabbath served as a sign of loyalty to God in modern times. She also cited the giving of manna in the wilderness as a test of loyalty. The Israelites did not receive manna on the Sabbath, but collected a double portion of manna on the day before in order to keep the Sabbath holy.⁸⁷ She summarized: “There is a mark to be placed upon God’s people, and that mark is the keeping of His holy Sabbath.” If students attend school on the Sabbath, they have to follow instructions and do various kinds of work not appropriate for the Sabbath. In so doing “the seal of God

⁸⁶Ibid. She referred particularly to John G. Matteson, as will be shown later.

⁸⁷MS 27, 1885, Diary for November 7, 1885.

cannot be placed upon them. They will be destroyed with the world.” Then she asked: “Will not their blood rest upon their parents?”⁸⁸

She addressed the main argument used to justify attending school on the Sabbath, as mentioned above, by referring to the question of Christ in Mark 3:4 when he asked if it were “lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath?”⁸⁹ To White, the argument from this text was entirely unwarranted, because in the context, Jesus was talking of his mission to destroy the works of Satan. Seven days a week, including the Sabbath, Christ was active to destroy the works of Satan. Reasoning the way the Christiania church had done, however, would justify regular work on the Sabbath in order to earn money enough to buy bread for the children. White averred that such reasoning would result in there being “no limit, no boundary line, to show what should be done and what should not be done”⁹⁰ on the Sabbath.

During her sermon, Mrs. White did not mention any names, but everyone present knew whom she was talking about, because John G. Matteson himself was sending his children to school on the Sabbath and the contractor Lars Hansen was engaging in business transactions on the Sabbath. Later she wrote in her diary: “Elder Matteson had not given our people a correct example. He has sent his children to school upon the Sabbath and to justify his course he has used the words of Christ, “It is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days.” She also noted that this looseness in keeping the Sabbath had

⁸⁸*HS*, 216.

⁸⁹For clarity, NAS is quoted here; the original quoted the KJV.

⁹⁰*HS*, 216.

caused God to withhold his blessings so that other problems arose in the church such as the spirit of contention, fault-finding, and making little things tests of fellowship.

When some argued that God was not so particular about keeping the Sabbath strictly, since it would involve monetary loss and even conflicts with the law of the land. White's response was quick and to the point: "God does not consult our convenience in regard to his commandments. He expects us to obey them. We are not to follow our own will and judgment, and flatter ourselves that God will come to our terms."⁹¹

Instead White offered practical advice on how the audience could come up to a higher standard of Sabbath-keeping. She counseled the members to use Friday as a day of preparation during which they could take a bath, polish their shoes, and have their clothes ready for the Sabbath.

She also appealed strongly to the church that if they would perseveringly determine to meet the highest possible standard of Christian life, they would bear much fruit, and through the Adventist center in Christiania, all Scandinavia would be blessed. If, on the other hand, they were satisfied with a low standard, leading their converts to be transgressors of God's law, even while professing to obey them, it would be better "to leave them in darkness until they could receive the truth in its purity."⁹²

The essential work for the church was to seek God for a complete change of heart so that he could create within them the desire to reach righteousness. The heart must be pure, wholly conformed to Christ's will, without reservation. If "conscience" is "on the side of the truth" while the heart is still "with the world," "a vein of unbelief" runs

⁹¹MS 27, 1885, Diary for November 7, 1885.

⁹²MS 3, 1885.

through the spiritual experience making its possessor unimpressionable and causing the feelings to “rise up against God” when facing words of reproof. White declared that these attitudes had caused a “deathlike slumber” within the church, but that God would accept nothing short of the “whole heart.”⁹³

White also pointed out that some thought that “religion consisted in going to church to hear sermons and to have a good, happy feeling.” Such believed that they were good Christians if “their emotions are stirred, and a few tears are shed.” Thus the real foundation of their salvation was their own emotions, and they thought that a “general belief that Jesus is the Saviour of the world” was sufficient for salvation. White called such a faith “fair-weather Christianity,” creating only “superficial goodness” without the least trace of “practical godliness,” which in the end would weigh nothing with God. “Let none,” she said, “continue to transgress, flattering themselves that their way is as good as God’s way.”⁹⁴

She concluded with remarks on fast-fulfilling Bible prophecies, and the hastening approach of judgments. She reminded her hearers that the antitypical Day of Atonement, a time of judgment just preceding the second coming of Christ, was already upon them; therefore all should confess and repent of their sins.⁹⁵ Finally she appealed to those who

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Celebrations of several ceremonial festivals are well known from the Old Testament, such as Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Wave Sheaf, the Feast of Weeks, the Blowing of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Within the Christian church, Passover is known as Easter, and the Feast of Weeks as Pentecost. These festivals were regulated by the “new moon” and not by the weekly cycle. All these festivals were “types,” pointing to Christ and his work for man’s salvation. Each “type” pointed forward to its corresponding “antitype,” or fulfillment.

“minister in sacred things” to be holy, pure in life, pure in conversation, and a true example to the church and the world.⁹⁶

Finally, she invited those who felt they were sinners to come forward and participate in a special prayer she would offer. About fifty people responded. When she called for testimonies, so many people wanted to speak that the meeting continued for about three hours, despite several attempts to bring it to a close. Several acknowledged that they had almost given up their faith in the Adventist message, but now they wanted to return to the fold.⁹⁷

Afterward she wrote in her diary that there was “some of the melting Spirit of the Lord in our midst,” but there were also those who “remained hard and unimpressed” and whose “hearts were rebellious.” Her concluding words in her diary were, “The work must go deeper yet.”⁹⁸

Matteson, the beloved teacher and the founder of the church in Christiania, stood beside Mrs. White that morning, translating for her. For about seven years the congregation had received from him lessons of the plan of salvation and the Christian's hope. He had also set before them doctrines new to them, which they had accepted, yet

Thus the Passover lamb symbolized Christ's crucifixion, the Unleavened Bread was a type of his rest in the tomb after having removed sin, the Wave Sheaf represented his resurrection on the first day of the week or the Christian Easter Sunday, and the Feast of Weeks pointed forward to the Christian Pentecost with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Adventists believe that the Old Testament festival of the Day of Atonement met its fulfillment or “antitype” when Christ entered the Most Holy Place of the heavenly temple to begin the end-time Day of Atonement, the beginning phase of the final judgment. According to the prophecy of Dan 8:13, 14, this took place in 1844.

⁹⁶MS 3, 1885.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸MS 27, November 7, 1885.

something very serious was lacking, since White had to speak so plainly to his church in his presence. Matteson had served Mrs. White as her translator that Sabbath morning. But the very next day, he left for Copenhagen, leaving Oyen to translate for her when she delivered her great lecture on temperance Sunday afternoon. Matteson would likely have translated for her on that occasion had he been present, since he had previously been critical of Oyen's linguistic abilities.⁹⁹

Having completed the unpleasant task of rebuking the whole church, and in particular its two most influential members, Elder John G. Matteson and entrepreneur Lars Hansen, openly and directly, because their sins had been committed openly, White felt exhausted.¹⁰⁰ After this weekend with the church, the lecture on temperance, and the departure of John G. Matteson, she remarked in her diary for Monday, November 9, that she felt "tired and not capable of writing much."¹⁰¹

The Pietistic Reformation Continues in Christiania

In spite of her fatigue Mrs. White met with the church in Christiania again on Monday night, November 9, and spoke on the letter to the Heb 12:12-17. Oyen translated. After the sermon E. G. Olsen asked those who wanted to join in special prayer to stand up. Quite a number rose and White offered the prayer. She said she felt the presence of the Holy Spirit melting and subduing hearts. Some confessed and repented of their sins

⁹⁹ MS 27, November 7, 1885; John G. Matteson to W. C. White, November 11, 1885; see also Mrs. A. B. Oyen to E. G. White, April 11, 1886.

¹⁰⁰ MS 27, 1885; Diary for November 7, 1885.

¹⁰¹ MS 27, 1885; Diary for November 9, 1885; cf. Matteson to W. C. White, November 11, 1885.

and wanted to return to the truth; others expressed their thanks for the light they had received which had greatly blessed them. White wrote that that the meeting had been strenuous and fatiguing, and it was very late before she got to bed.¹⁰²

The following day she was still too tired to write anything. Yet, after some shopping in town she met with the church the same night and spoke on Col 3:12-17, admonishing the people to claim the promises of God and with his help live up to the biblical standard of sanctification. The meeting closed with prayer and testimonies.¹⁰³

For the rest of her time in Christiania Mrs. White's main burden was to confront the spirit of censorious strife, quarreling, and faultfinding that so marred the personal relationships and fellowship in the church. At the same time, she continued her struggle for Sabbath reform.¹⁰⁴

By now, both Mrs. White and her son W. C. White were convinced that the work in Norway needed more workers as soon as possible. Therefore, W. C. White decided to leave Norway immediately, in order to present the need to the upcoming session of the General Conference in America. His decision seems to have taken his mother by surprise, like a bolt from the blue. Her first reaction was that this was a matter of no concern to him. She, however, changed her mind, deciding that he could serve God's cause better by going to America and presenting the needs of the European missions in person, rather than merely by letter. Therefore she thought he should go, although she would miss him and his sound advice, which she felt was greatly needed just then, particularly because of

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³MS 33, 1885. This manuscript contains her entire sermon for that night.

¹⁰⁴MS 27, 1885, Diary for November 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 1885; *HS*, 212.

the situation.¹⁰⁵ Thus on Friday, November 13, W. C. White left Christiania for Liverpool, England, to travel from there to the United States.

The following day, Sabbath, November 14, 1885, Mrs. White preached at the divine service in the morning. The hall was packed. She talked about the high priest Joshua and the Angel of the Lord in Zech 3 who removed his sins and exchanged Joshua's filthy garments for his own robe of righteousness. She felt very solemn. As part of her sermon, she once more spoke very plainly upon the importance of keeping the Sabbath rightly, since it was an indispensable part of the Advent message. Generally speaking, the response was good, but Lars Hansen left the hall the moment she closed her sermon. Lars Hansen held highly responsible positions in the church and because of his wealth and position in society, had great influence in the church.¹⁰⁶

Elder Oyen later wrote to W. C. White, that during the Sabbath morning service, November 14, his mother had spoken very directly and to the point concerning Sabbath-keeping. People were deeply impressed. Some, however, became upset and rather angry and said that it did not matter what they did, because according to her understanding, just about any activity would be breaking the Sabbath.¹⁰⁷

In the afternoon of that same Sabbath, A. B. Oyen read aloud a twenty-seven-page message which Mrs. White had written the previous Wednesday especially for Lars Hansen, sixteen pages of which Oyen had already translated.¹⁰⁸ Although this testimony

¹⁰⁵MS 27, 1885, Diary for November 7, 1885.

¹⁰⁶Matteson, "Report," *TT*, December 8, 1885, 190.

¹⁰⁷E. G. White, Letter 35, 1885; see also A. B. Oyen to W. C. White, November 23, 1885.

¹⁰⁸MS 27, 1885.

was particularly written with Hansen in mind, it was applicable to the whole church, and Oyen omitted mentioning Hansen's name in his reading.¹⁰⁹ The meeting dragged on due to many testimonies. But according to White, there was no response from Hansen to the message after that meeting.¹¹⁰

Lars Hansen, however, in a private conversation with Elder Oyen gave his response when he referred to a certain expression in the testimony which dealt with persons who justified violation of the Sabbath by thinking that it was all right, since the money earned during the Sabbath was used to promote the cause. He maintained that he had never harbored such thoughts at all. Hansen continued by saying that he felt sorry for any personal violation of the Sabbath commandment whether it happened in his home or at work. At the same time Hansen said that work performed by his workers had never bothered him, because they were sub-contractors. That is why Hansen could not understand why a mason under an independent contract could not work on the Sabbath with his men without making him guilty. These people work "indirectly" on the Sabbath just as a shoemaker or a tailor does, when they have work done for them elsewhere in the city without superintending the work or having direct charge of the work when it is done.¹¹¹

In spite of Hansen's apparent self-justification, Mrs. White expressed in her diary how happy she was that Hansen invited her for a ride through the city in his own carriage the following day. She appreciated his hospitality and after the ride was able to talk with

¹⁰⁹A. B. Oyen to W. C. White, November 23, 1885.

¹¹⁰Ellen G. White, Letter 35, 1885.

¹¹¹A. B. Oyen to W. C. White, November 23, 1885.

him once more about Sabbath-keeping. Hansen's response was that as soon as he could, he would bring his business affairs into harmony with biblical principles. When he asked whether she would return to Norway sometime later she answered by saying that without doubt she would return. It was a cold November day and the sun was shining in all its brilliance.¹¹²

In a letter to her son W. C. White a few days later, she related the incident and told him that she had "managed to bring in again the vexed question of the Sabbath."¹¹³ Hansen seems to have responded positively to her appeal and assured her that he would indeed change his business procedures as soon as he could. White was much encouraged by Hansen's friendliness and positive attitude and felt that the visit had been a "very pleasant social time."¹¹⁴

Lars Hansen and Ellen G. White

Lars Hansen was a well-to-do and successful building contractor born in 1839 in Asperud, Denmark. He was a master bricklayer by trade and a ship owner.¹¹⁵ He lived in his own three-story house at Brogaden 10 in Christiania, Norway. His family residence was on the third floor with an entrance hall, five rooms with covering of wallpaper, four rooms with covering of painted wood paneling, three toilets, fully equipped kitchen, a

¹¹²MS 27, November 15, 1885.

¹¹³Ellen G. White, Letter 35, 1885; MS 27, 1885, Diary for November 15, 1885.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵*Folketellingen (Census) 1/1-1891, Christiania By (City of Christiania), Brogaden 10, tellings (Counts) nr. 149, Husskjema (House list) nr. 12, Riksarkivet/Statsarkivet (Public Records), Oslo, Norway.*

hall, a walk-in closet, and two powder privies.¹¹⁶ He also had a telephone, the first of which in Christiania were installed by the Bell Telephone Company in 1880.¹¹⁷

Brogaden, the street he lived on, was the entrance street to the city from the north, east, and south. In its time it formed the boundary between the densely populated poor quarter, Vaterland, and the houses fit for kings in the area on the northern side. Brugata¹¹⁸ itself was a rather respected street of artisans, craftsmen, and small grocers.¹¹⁹ Hansen also had a summer house outside the city. Mrs. White had met Lars Hansen privately for the first time in his home on Thursday, November 5, 1885.¹²⁰

When White, in her sermon the following Sabbath, dealt with the problem of business partnerships with non-believers, she must have had Lars Hansen in mind, since he was the only member of the church fitting such a description. Hansen was a member of the church board, the building committee, and was at the same time the contractor of the new church building now under construction. He was also in charge of the building of the new publishing house in Switzerland and a delegate to the third session of the Central European Missionary Council there. A man of such high standing and great influence

¹¹⁶*Christiania Bys Baradtaxt-protokol* (City of Christiania's Ledger of Fire Valuation for Insurance), September 16, 1881, Prot K 31, 3a, Oslo Byarkiv (Oslo City Archive).

¹¹⁷Einar Onsum, "Da vi fikk telefon" (When we got the phone), *Byminner* (City Memories) (Oslo: Oslo Bymuseum [Oslo City Museum], 1961), 6.

¹¹⁸Brugata is the same street as Brogaden. Brugata is a later spelling.

¹¹⁹Ina Backer, "En bondehandelsgård får leve videre" (A trade farm gets to live on), *Byminner* (City Memories) (Oslo: Oslo Bymuseum [Oslo City Museum], 1974), 29; see also Svein Andersen, "Oslos paradebro gjenåpnes i morgen" (Oslo Parade Bridge reopens tomorrow), *Aftenposten Aften* (Evening mail, evening issue), October 24, 1997, 8.

¹²⁰MS 27, 1885.

was also naturally an example to the other church members. He was thus responsible to show the nature and character of Adventism, especially how to keep the Sabbath holy according to the commandment. White had said in her sermon: “Even in business relations we cannot, without involving principle, connect ourselves with those who are not loyal to God.” In her understanding, it was not enough for Hansen to attend church on the Sabbath, or for himself not to work on the Sabbath while others were doing construction work for him or handling money matters on his behalf on the same day and he then sharing in the profits coming from these activities on the Sabbath.¹²¹

On Wednesday, November 11, she again met Hansen privately and had a very serious talk with him about this matter. Since Hansen could not speak English, Oyen served as an interpreter. As usual White spoke very plainly and reminded him of the danger to himself in violating the Sabbath commandment and the danger he was to others because of his influence as an example in the church.¹²²

That night she preached on the shortness of time and the need for greater spirituality. The next day she noted in her diary that “some of our brethren do not seem to feel that interest which they should feel to arise, put away their sins, and come into favor with God.”¹²³ Most likely she was especially worried about Hansen. Although Hansen always showed himself very friendly towards Mrs. White and expressed a certain willingness to reform, which was far from the reaction of others, he was still hesitant to commit himself fully to the Lord.

¹²¹MS 3, 1885; also in *HS*, 215.

¹²²MS 27, 1885; Diary for November 11.

¹²³MS 27, 1885; Diary for November 12.

After leaving Norway, Mrs. White wrote a letter to Lars Hansen telling him, among other things, how the Sabbath was being kept both far and near, in such places as Switzerland, France, Italy, Russia, and India. She wanted him to know how important Sabbath-keeping was, since he knew of that light. Her concern for the Hansen family was great indeed. She said: “I hope you will be strengthened, settled, and established in the faith. The work is bound to go forward and triumph whether we go forward with it or not. It will be victorious.”¹²⁴ Then she asked: “The question is, Will we be victorious with it?”¹²⁵

She was not only concerned regarding the Hansen family’s Sabbath-keeping. She also feared they were not fully converted. They were “delaying the decisions” they needed to make, and this delay led to a lack of piety and converting grace; because of this they were “being self-deceived.” God required “the whole heart, the entire affections.” She told them that more “home piety, sweet, satisfied contentment” was needed. She admonished them to let kindness and love rule in the household, shunning fault-finding, grumbling, pettishness, harshness, scolding, and severity. She said that a converted Christian did not look for “his present convenience,” nor was he “ambitious for display,” or craving “the praise of men”; his manners would not be “harsh and dictatorial like the godless.” A Christian does what is “right because it is right.” She went on to tell Hansen that he should be “such a man,” who was kind, humble, thoughtful of others’ happiness

¹²⁴E. G. White to Brother and Sister Hansen, Letter 29, February 7, 1886.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*

and thus “reflecting light from heaven upon men” and bearing at the same time “precious fruit” in his home, in his neighborhood, and in the church.¹²⁶

“I know your brethren will never say what I say,” she acknowledged, “therefore I feel it necessary to speak the words I know no one else will speak to you.” “Your works are not of the right character now,” and if “the fire of the last day [should] kindle upon them as they now are, they would prove unworthy, hay, wood, stubble.” She then pleaded with him saying: “Do not think this severe. It is truth. I know what I am writing about.”¹²⁷

White then told Hansen how important he was for the church in Christiania because the church members needed great changes in their lives; they needed to “become more humble, have more fervent zeal for Christ, be more patient, more kind, more teachable, more Christlike in every respect.” Then she turned her attention back to Hansen: “You have talents of ability that God has entrusted to your keeping to be sanctified to his service.” If he did not fully surrender himself to God, she warned him that “all your ability will prove dangerous to others, leading them to walk apart from the truth, apart from Christ.” On the other hand, if he would set an example of Christian piety, it would show both the church and the world “the sanctifying influence of the truth upon the character.” In conclusion she said: “There is [a] much greater ingathering yet to be realized in Christiania if the church will come into right position before God, each seeking to set his own heart and his own house in order.”¹²⁸

¹²⁶E. G. White to Brother and Sister Hansen, Letter 29, February 7, 1886.

¹²⁷Ibid.

¹²⁸Ibid.

By now Lars Hansen had heard and read Mrs. White's handwriting on the wall. Yet, despite her warnings about his faults, her mild but pointed rebukes, and her exhortation and advice, Hansen's Sabbath-breaking and other problems continued. His assurance given in November the year before that he "meant to get around to change his position just as soon as he could" did not materialize. Having received the letter, Hansen went to Copenhagen to consult with Matteson.¹²⁹ Jennie Oyen wrote in a letter to Ellen G. White that she expected this visit would result in Hansen making a decision "one way or the other."¹³⁰ Hansen thought very highly of Matteson, and Matteson's advice would no doubt have a great influence upon Hansen.

Nobody knows what Matteson and Hansen talked about during that time in Copenhagen. According to Ellen G. White, Hansen's conduct continued to be "after the world and not after the Lord's plan." He conducted his business as usual, even on the Sabbath. Ellen G. White also said in a letter to Matteson that Hansen has "no more sacred sense of the Sabbath than to keep it when convenient, and transgress it when it is convenient for his own interest." Thus Hansen was "dishonoring God in his business matters," showing that he had "no true and sacred ideas of holy things." According to White he was not "controllable by the Spirit of God" at this time. This also made him harsh and dictatorial in his family.¹³¹ She went on to express concern regarding the way Hansen treated his domestic servants. She said: "The management in the house is conducted upon principles the reverse of Christian. The employer is too ready to prey

¹²⁹Mrs. A. B. Oyen to E. G. White, April 11, 1886.

¹³⁰Ibid.

¹³¹E. G. White to J. G. Matteson, Letter 43, April 13, 1886.

upon the employed.” According to White, Hansen’s attitude was: “How can flesh and blood be turned to the profitable account?” The consequence of this was that master and servant were “often arrayed against each other like natural enemies.” “How can angels abide in that house?” she asked. “There must be a decided reformation in Br[other] Hansen’s family or they will all be lost together, parents and children.”¹³²

A. B. Oyen and E. G. Olsen went to Lars Hansen and had a serious talk with him, which resulted in Hansen’s withdrawal of his membership from the church.¹³³ In spite of the fact that Hansen withdrew his membership, he was still in charge of the construction of the new church and the publishing house. The building was dedicated March 14, 1886, with about 700 present, exceeding the seating capacity of 500. Matteson started a series of public meetings at this time, drawing about 400-500 people every night, of which 140-150 came to the Sabbath meetings.¹³⁴

According to Matteson things had improved considerably in the church. He wrote: “There has been some prejudice and ill feelings in the church, but the Lord has helped us to remove this to a great extent. Confessions have been made. . . . A much better feeling exists in general, and we hope for still better results. A few have drawn back, but others come in to take their place.”¹³⁵

Although Lars Hansen had formally withdrawn his membership from the church in Christiania, he was still a member of the church’s committees. Matteson was happy with

¹³²Ibid.

¹³³A. B. Oyen to E. G. White, May 2, 1886.

¹³⁴Matteson, “Norway and Sweden,” *RH*, April 13, 1886, 236.

¹³⁵Matteson, “Norway,” *RH*, May 4, 1886, 284.

this although Hansen had been “cut off by his own positive request.”¹³⁶ Matteson argued that since Hansen no longer belonged to the church, the church could do nothing about his transgressing the Sabbath commandment and Matteson wanted to grant him “a voice in the church as if he belonged to the church.”¹³⁷ Ellen G. White told Matteson, however, that “through this one man Satan comes in to control other minds.”¹³⁸

In some way Lars Hansen’s heart still “belonged” to the church. He attended all the meetings of the church and was present when a special message to the church was read from Ellen G. White on April 10, 1886. On April 11, 1886, Jennie Oyen wrote a letter to Ellen G. White telling her about the reaction of Lars Hansen to the reading of her second testimony on April 10. Mrs. Oyen said that Hansen “talked good” and “asked for forgiveness for his past course.”¹³⁹ Sometime in April, Hansen applied for readmission to the church. He was not admitted right away due to some opposition. Matteson also thought he “would have to make a better stand than he has ever done before.”¹⁴⁰

A. B. Oyen thought Hansen was a changed man. As a building contractor he had no men directly in his employ. He subcontracted all work to others, whether they were masons or carpenters. These in turn hired needed workmen and paid their wages. Whether these men worked on the Sabbath or not was no longer Hansen’s responsibility, since they neither worked for him directly, nor did he superintend their work, or have

¹³⁶Matteson, quoted in E. G. White to Matteson, Letter 43, April 13, 1886.

¹³⁷Ibid.

¹³⁸E. G. White to Matteson, Letter 43, April 13, 1886.

¹³⁹Mrs. A. B. Oyen to E. G. White, April 11, 1886.

¹⁴⁰John G. Matteson, quoted in Ellen G. White, Letter 43, 1886.

others superintend it for him.¹⁴¹ Elder Oyen was not sure whether this was in harmony with the recommendation of the council in Basel or not and therefore asked Ellen G. White to comment upon that matter. Mrs. White replied that even before leaving the USA for Europe, she had been shown that accounts were being settled and business was being done on the Sabbath and therefore urged anyone engaged in such a work to cut loose from such engagements, because this was an infringement of God's law.¹⁴² In her diary she noted that these words applied to Lars Hansen.¹⁴³

During Ellen G. White's second visit to Norway, July 2 through 16, 1886, she did not address specifically the question of Sabbath-keeping with Hansen.¹⁴⁴ During this visit, however, Hansen told her that when he read her letters he could not at first see any light in them, but having read them four times he saw the light and could receive it all. She was happy to hear this, because she had "trembled in [her] soul as to how he would receive" her testimony.¹⁴⁵

This little light Hansen saw went out as time went on. He still represented the church in 1887/1888 as a member of the publishing house committee.¹⁴⁶ He divorced his wife, either in 1887 or 1888. Church members visited her to encourage her to stay in the

¹⁴¹A. B. Oyen to E. G. White, May 2, 1886.

¹⁴²MS 7, 1886.

¹⁴³MS 66, 1886.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁴⁵Letter 113, 1886.

¹⁴⁶*Christiania Byskriveri* (Christiania City Registration), Handelsregisteret (Trade Registry): C-Firmaanmeldelser (Commerce Notification), eske (box) 5 (1886-1888). Nr. 35/1887. See also *Christiania Byskriveri*, Handelsregisteret: Registreings-protokoll nr. 5 (1886-1889), oppsl. (entry) 40, Statsarkivet, Oslo, Norway.

church, but without any success. She was disfellowshipped February 9, 1889.¹⁴⁷ The name of Lars Hansen is nowhere to be found in the church protocol after January 1, 1888. This is confirmed by Public Records, January 1, 1891.¹⁴⁸

John G. Matteson and Ellen G. White

At the time of Ellen G. White's first visit to Norway, John G. Matteson was living in Copenhagen, Denmark, where he had begun work in the spring of 1885. He had also worked in Stockholm and Örebro, Sweden, during 1884. In the summer of 1886 he moved back to Stockholm with his family where he stayed until he made a permanent return to America in the summer of 1888.¹⁴⁹

When William C. White attended the 1885 General Conference session in Battle Creek, to present the needs of the work in Norway, his mother wrote him that she "wanted Matteson to stand in the proper light before the [General] Conference." She underlined that "we see mistakes and failure in his work and mission, but how much better would others have done [?]"¹⁵⁰ She recognized that Matteson had begun the work from nothing, and in the process had suffered much privation and he therefore "deserved our appreciation." She also said that she wanted to "encourage him all we can, and not

¹⁴⁷*Menighedsbog* for Den 1. Syvende-Dags Adventistmenighed i Kristiania (Church Minutes for the First Seventh-day Adventist Church in Christiania) (nr. 2 from 1888 and forward).

¹⁴⁸*Ibid.* See also: *Folketellingen* (Census) 1/1-1891, Christiania By (Christiania City), Brogaden 10, tellings nr. 149, Husskjema (Household list) nr. 12, Riksarkivet/Statsarkivet (Public Records), Oslo, Norway.

¹⁴⁹*HS*, 57-78.

¹⁵⁰Letter 36, 1885.

say one word to discourage” him.¹⁵¹ Also, she later wrote both Matteson and Hansen “good encouraging letters with no reference to anything that [would] make them feel bad.”¹⁵²

But at other times she found it necessary to confront Matteson. In November 1885, she told him that by sending his own children to school on the Sabbath, he had led the whole church not to reverence the Sabbath day and keep it according to the commandment. In so doing, he had opened the gates for other evils to enter the church.¹⁵³ In March and April 1886, when Matteson retained Hansen on church committees even after Hansen had withdrawn from church membership rather than cease his Sabbath-breaking, Ellen G. White could no longer keep silent. She assured Matteson that this “move is all out of God’s order and shows blind, hazardous movements.” She continued: “I know that God cannot approve of your connecting Brother Hansen with a committee or giving him any trust while he has cut himself loose from the church.” In his blindness Matteson had made Hansen his “confidant and counselor.” Thus she said Matteson had supported Larsen, and Larsen had done the same for Matteson “and God is dishonored by you both.” Thus Matteson had said to an unrepentant sinner that all was well with his soul.¹⁵⁴

Matteson received this letter in the middle of a series of public meetings which he held in his brand-new church building in Christiania, and which had been dedicated only

¹⁵¹Ibid.

¹⁵²Letter 72a, 1886.

¹⁵³MS 27, November 7, 1885.

¹⁵⁴Letter 43, 1886.

weeks before. Mrs. White now told Matteson that God had showed her while she was still in America that “the mold” in which he was shaping the church would never make them perfect, because he was crying peace where there was no peace and “weaving into the labors an element which moves the feelings and leaves the heart unchanged.” Such “mere emotional exercise” was worthless, just as was his harsh manner when he hammered at the people. The low morality and limited practical godliness resulting from this misrepresented both Christ and the truth.¹⁵⁵

Everything depends on the right leadership exerted, she believed. “I have not much hope for the church,” she wrote, “unless the very ones who labor for them are converted men, and Christ-like in character.” Then White touched upon the core of the matter: You “are standing directly in the way of our reaching the hearts of many because all their experience, and all their religion centers in their high esteem of yourself.”¹⁵⁶

Writing this letter to Matteson was far from easy for Ellen G. White. She said: “I am pained to write you these things. I hoped I should not have to write them. Oh how I dread to write these things to you!” But she had to write “lest my soul will be chargeable with your sin.”¹⁵⁷

White wanted him to know that the message she was conveying to him came from God: “From time to time God has seen fit to open before me your life, your temperament, and your character.” She then told him of his “pettish spirit” and his “unbounded confidence in himself.” “Your supreme love and confidence in yourself must be broken

¹⁵⁵Ibid.

¹⁵⁶Letter 43, 1886.

¹⁵⁷Letter 43, 1886.

up in some way, or you will be weighed in the balance and found wanting.” Therefore she said his “soul was not right with God.”¹⁵⁸

Since Matteson came to Norway in 1878, he had performed a very powerful and courageous task, even the work of two men, according to O. A. Olsen, but Ellen G. White told him that his hard work “will be no excuse in your case that you do not reach the Bible standard in Christian character. Sin is sin, whether it is in J. G. Matteson or in the man of lowly position. You are not right with God.”¹⁵⁹

Ellen G. White also took up Matteson’s behavior at home. She told him to put away his “childish, babyish feelings and manners” and “put on meekness, gentleness, kindness, forbearance, and long-suffering.” He needed to “bring religion into his home; religion must regulate your life. The truth must sanctify your words, your thoughts, and your actions.” White had confronted Matteson with this very problem two years earlier when she told him to be “considerate, true, and tender to your wife and to your children.” At the same time White also told him that nearly “all the time your wife’s heart is heavy and discouraged,” and that her “secret sorrows and discouragements” he had brought upon her were “uprooting her faith in everything.”¹⁶⁰

Pride of popularity and achievement braced Matteson to rebel against the voice of conscience and the grace of God. In a letter to her son, White said that Matteson was not personally “guilty of that devotion the people gave him”¹⁶¹ but that it was no excuse for

¹⁵⁸Letter 43, 1886.

¹⁵⁹Letter 43, 1886.

¹⁶⁰Ibid.

¹⁶¹Letter 36, 1886.

him. “You hold yourself too high,” she wrote, “and others hold you too high; therefore anything you may do looks right in the eyes of others.”¹⁶² She said some regarded him “as though you were almost Christ.”¹⁶³

In spite of Matteson’s apparent success of eight or nine years’ efforts, White had to tell him that it would have been better, “far better . . . if a blow had not been struck there” at all, since the testimony of the church was such that “it works against the truth” and the “truth is kept far away from the center of your being.”¹⁶⁴

Matteson’s Reaction to Ellen G. White’s Admonitions and Warnings

When in her sermon on Sabbath, November 7, 1885, with Matteson as translator, Mrs. White rebuked him publicly and severely, though without mentioning his name during her address, Matteson departed the very next day for Copenhagen, Denmark, leaving Oyen to translate her temperance lecture on Sunday, as already mentioned.¹⁶⁵ Consequently, while Mrs. White delivered her grand lecture on temperance to both the high and the lowly of the social stratum of Christiania, Matteson sat on a train bound for Copenhagen. This incident serves to underline the possible mental strain Matteson was under and his negative reactions at times to corrections by White.

¹⁶²Letter 43, 1886.

¹⁶³Ibid.

¹⁶⁴Ibid.

¹⁶⁵MS 27, 1885.

Soon after Matteson's arrival in Copenhagen, he wrote a letter to W. C. White who had left for America a little earlier.¹⁶⁶ Matteson expressed his gratitude and happiness for having been able to spend some time with him in Scandinavia. He thought it had benefited him in many ways. He then told W. C. White that he had not seen in him the complete Christian moral or spiritual perfection and asked whether he had been pressing forward for such a goal or not. "Alas," Matteson continued, "perfection is not to be found among mortals."¹⁶⁷ On the other hand, Matteson maintained that he had seen in W. C. White more eminent qualities and virtues than he had witnessed in himself. Yet, Matteson told him that he always was grateful for any opportunity granted him to be with people who were upright and noble and who were seriously striving to secure themselves the immortal crown. He then reminded him of how grateful he should be for having been blessed by a praying father and a devoted Christian mother. Matteson, on the other hand, said that he had been subjected to a cursing father and mother who quarreled all the time and that he had heard the first prayer in his life when he was twenty-four years of age.

Matteson then mentioned a point which had troubled him. He said that he had noticed when traveling with W. C. White's mother, E. G. White, on their way to Christiania, that she had looked at Matteson with suspicion—a glance he had never seen on her face before, and that was so different from the Christ-like expression which had so often adorned her face and cheered others. Matteson went on to say that she had not spoken a word to him and that he right away had known that she for one reason or another harbored suspicion towards him. Matteson could not imagine for what reason she

¹⁶⁶John G. Matteson to W. C. White, November 11, 1885.

¹⁶⁷Ibid.

did so and it had made him sorrowful. He then asked W. C. White not to tell his mother about his surmises.¹⁶⁸

This was not the first time suspicion towards others had been aroused in Matteson's mind. Earlier in his ministry, when his colleagues did not agree with him on everything or criticized his approach to the church mission, he had subjected others to suspicion and even prejudices, throwing reproach upon them while feeling sorry for himself. Before Matteson left for Scandinavia in 1877, the leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church had given him their sympathy and support as seen above. Three years into the Scandinavian work, Matteson wrote to S. N. Haskell that at the time of his departure for Scandinavia he had met with so much "jealousy and suspicion, and sometimes cruel blame in public print, that my mind was strongly impressed before going to Europe, that another man ought to go, in whom the leaders" of the General Conference "could have more confidence." Matteson had "urged for a long time" for such a move because he felt it "exceedingly difficult to work under the sharp eyes of suspicion continually."¹⁶⁹ These two letters indicate that Matteson felt he had been hard-pressed all along, that he had been and still was being treated unfairly by the top leaders of the church, and that the criticism was personal rather than objective in nature.

On March 26, 1886, Mrs. White wrote to Matteson that she was convinced that her visit to the church in Christiania had been of no benefit to the members. She told him that the general, current, and predominant spirit of contention and fault-finding indicated that at present not one in ten of the members were ready for heaven. Except for a few, the great majority had only external Christian piety, professing the truth, but not practicing it.

¹⁶⁸Ibid.

She thought it would have been much better if these people had never been brought into the church, since their present character was a discredit to God. She maintained that God's disapproval rested upon the church, because of the evil spirit nurtured by the vast majority of the members. Such a spirit represented a great hindrance for the gospel mission and God was too wise to bring new members into the church, because he knew that if he did so the present members would ruin them by their behavior. The beauty of the new building did not mean anything to Ellen G. White as long as the worshipers refused to acquire the beauty of the character of Christ. She also told Matteson that if the brethren in America had known the spiritual condition of the church they would not have been willing to help expand the work there at all. There were other places where the meager means of the church could have been spent more profitably. The means spent in Christiania was like money put into a basket full of holes.¹⁷⁰

White continued by stating that one main reason why her efforts had been without success was that prominent members and leaders in the church openly rejected her message. She mentioned especially Lars Hansen and H. Steen, having of course Matteson in mind as well.¹⁷¹ If these men had gladly accepted her message and acted accordingly, this would have effected a decided reformation for the better in the church. This great hindrance had made Mrs. White unable to do much in Christiania. She also pointed out that the leaders had lost the favor of God by their actions, thus helping the people to

¹⁶⁹ John G. Matteson to S. N. Haskell, March 22, 1880.

¹⁷⁰ E. G. White to J. G. Matteson, March 29, 1886.

¹⁷¹ H. Steen was the secretary of the church board of the SDA Church in Christiania from 1882 to 1887. See *Menighedsbog for den første Syvende-Dags Adventist Menighed*, Kristiania, Norge, 27-61.

deceive themselves. As to Matteson and Hansen, White stated emphatically that the plan these two gentlemen had been following had been, *If you support me, I will support you*. And to do so in the name of God was not just taking his name in vain, but deliberately abusing his divine authority.

White went so far as to suggest that action should be taken to expel the gossiping members from the church. The strength of the church depended on the permanent absence of these people. Firm action was needed, even if this meant that half, or even two thirds, of the members left. The remaining, Christ-like members God could bless abundantly and bring in a new and manifold harvest.¹⁷²

Ellen G. White had not lost her interest in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Christiania, but she had doubts whether she should come again or not, because her testimony might make some think that she was casting a shadow upon the work and person of Matteson. They would then pity him and the more reject her testimony.¹⁷³

White sent additional written testimony to the church in Christiania hoping that it would bring about a much needed reform and thus prepare the way for a second visit.¹⁷⁴ She also sent Matteson a special testimony to put things in order and above all to change his life in such a way that he might stand as a true leader of the church. She thought that her success in Christiania depended to a large degree upon the firm leadership of Matteson himself.¹⁷⁵ Having warned Matteson of the danger of separating himself from

¹⁷²E. G. White to J. G. Matteson, March 29, 1886.

¹⁷³Ibid.

¹⁷⁴MS 27, 1885, Diary for November 9, 10, 11, 12, 1885.

¹⁷⁵Letter 36, 1885; Letter 72a, 1886.

God, Ellen G. White told him: “I have not thrown you aside, I have not lost my interest in you.”¹⁷⁶

When Ellen G. White looked back on her visit to Christiania in 1885 she said: “In our labor for the Christiania church we faithfully presented before them the far-reaching requirements of God’s law, and their great need of thorough repentance and returning unto the Lord. During our meetings, the dear Saviour came very near to us again and again. A good work was begun.”¹⁷⁷ “But,” she said, “some who should have been personally interested, were looking on as though they had no interest at stake. The testimonies which the Lord gave them did not seem to be received. They did not break the bands which held them under condemnation of the Spirit of God. The Saviour was knocking at the door of their hearts, but they were unwilling then and there to remove the rubbish which barred his entrance. The Lord’s time was not their time.” If the leaders of the church had not let this opportunity pass, but had “taken their position decidedly for the truth, determined to share with the church the warfare, the self-denial, and the reproach, and to share the final victory; there would have been a revival whose influence would have been far-reaching outside the church.”¹⁷⁸ White hoped that this would “not be the last invitation of the Spirit of God to them,” but thought that “all has been done that could be done on this visit.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶Letter 43, 1886.

¹⁷⁷*HS*, 218.

¹⁷⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹*MS* 27, 1885; *HS*, 207.

Ellen G. White's Second Visit to Christiania

Ellen G. White's second visit to Norway took place Friday, July 2, through Friday, July 16, 1886.¹⁸⁰ Two messages from her had been read in the Christiania Seventh-day Adventist Church on April 10 and May 1 the same year. Both Jennie and A. B. Oyen reported that the church had been glad to receive the message and that the response from the majority of the members had been positive. A. B. Oyen thought that these messages had "in a measure prepared the way for future letters and labors, in case it would be consistent for you to visit us again,"¹⁸¹ and he hoped this would be possible during the same summer.

On her way to Christiania Ellen G. White made a short stop at Örebro, Sweden, to attend a mission conference. Here she had a private talk with Anna, Matteson's wife. Anna convinced her that her "close letters to Matteson in regard to many points of his manner of labor" had effected changes in Matteson and that he was now willing to work with her in order to reform the church in Christiania. White was also able to convince Anna that O. A. Olsen's arrival in Norway was not to replace her husband, but to assist him in every way in his work.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰MS 66, 1886.

¹⁸¹Jennie Oyen to E. G. White, April 11, 1886; A. B. Oyen to E. G. White, May 2, 1886.

¹⁸²MS 5, 1886. O. A. Olsen was the oldest son of Andrew Olsen who immigrated to the United States in 1850 because of his faith, as presented in chapter 1. He was also a brother of the E. G. Olsen mentioned earlier.

At the mission conference at Örebro, June 23, 1886, Ellen G. White gave a talk that took a close look at the beginnings of the work in Scandinavia.¹⁸³ Honest and pointed as always, she said that many had accepted the truth “as it had been presented to them,” but that they had not advanced much, and that in order to help members find “a more thorough conversion,” there needed to be a thoroughgoing “education of the people.” There was “altogether too much fear and trembling to bring the people up to a high standard, for fear that they will draw back.” But she maintained that it was better for the church to have “two in these meetings that have living faith in God” than to have “one hundred that had no faith in the truth.”¹⁸⁴

White’s address had much good to say about Matteson. She said that he had carried “a tremendous load” while preaching and writing and thus “strained every nerve to bring the truth before you.” She then said that if the members themselves were to invest more time and more means in the work, they could “do tenfold more than you think you can do.” She also pointed out that everyone would have to “think in a different strain” and work much closer together and under the united leadership of Matteson and O. A. Olsen. She said that Olsen had come to Scandinavia to “take hold with Brother Matteson, and Brother Matteson with him, and they can thus help each other in carrying forward this work.”¹⁸⁵

To G. I. Butler, then in his second term as General Conference president (1880-1888), Mrs. White expressed that Matteson was “a very feeble man in more respects than

¹⁸³Ibid.

¹⁸⁴Ibid.

¹⁸⁵Ibid.

one,” that he was “in a large degree sickly and needed the grace of God,” since he did not believe in the ability of other members to do almost anything, not even in the tract and missionary literature work. She thought therefore that Olsen was “greatly needed” and hoped that from the time of his arrival “there will be a decided change for the better.”¹⁸⁶

As she considered whether to go to Norway or not for a second visit, she realized that there was a very important link between her writings and her appearance in person before the members. In a letter from Örebro, June 28, 1886, she said: “As my writings come to the people in their own language, then they know they have seen the writer and heard her speak and know for themselves what manner of spirit she is of.”¹⁸⁷ In the same letter she said: “All seem to have great confidence in me, if I am allowed to be any judge, and I seek in every way to help them.”¹⁸⁸ The very next day she stated: “I have consented to visit Christiania, Norway. May the Lord strengthen me to bear the message He has given me to bear to the people.”¹⁸⁹

The day after Ellen G. White’s second arrival in Christiania was a Sabbath. At the divine service she spoke for the first time in the new church. She chose her text from 2 Pet 3:11-14 and “did not cut any corners of truth to please anyone,”¹⁹⁰ not even the Methodist minister and his wife who were present.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁶Letter 117, 1886.

¹⁸⁷Letter 100, 1886.

¹⁸⁸Ibid.

¹⁸⁹MS 65, 1886.

¹⁹⁰MS 57, 1886.

¹⁹¹MS 66, 1886.

Visit to Larvik

In the evening she took a steamer to the town of Larvik, or Laurvig as it was called then. Edward G. Olsen had organized the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Larvik in 1886 with fourteen members. He had begun a series of meetings in Maler Øgaard's Hall at Jægersborggaten, December 6, 1885. Hundreds of people attended his meetings. He had also held meetings in Skien, Kragerø, and Arendal.¹⁹²

Ellen G. White reported that about thirty people had accepted the truth there, characterizing them as "excellent people."¹⁹³ In spite of fanatics in the area, one of whom believed he was God, and another that he was Christ, the "standard of truth had been planted there,"¹⁹⁴ said White. She also greatly appreciated the fact that no beer or liquor was sold either in the town itself or its vicinity.¹⁹⁵

In the afternoon, Mrs. White held a meeting at five o'clock in the town of Larvik. A number of people attended the meeting although the hall was not quite full. She based her sermon on Luke 10:25-28, with great emphasis on strict obedience to the Ten Commandments. She said that God had expected absolute willingness and submission of Adam to keep the commandments and the same was true of the whole human family. To make clear what she was talking about, she quoted the following from Gen 2:1-3: "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his

¹⁹²*Jarlsberg og Laurvigs Amtstidende* (Jarlsberg and Laurvigs County Tidings), 4 December 1885, 4.

¹⁹³MS 57, 1886.

¹⁹⁴*Ibid.*

work which he had made.” Edward G. Olsen said he had never before heard anyone speak so clearly, vividly, and forcefully. He appreciated her presentation very much and so did the church members.¹⁹⁶

Mrs. White much enjoyed her trip to Larvik and her fellowship with the members there. She also found relaxation in a walk through the beautiful beech forest, but soon she was back in Christiania where the weather was damp and chilly and not to her liking. She said that July in Norway was “like October in America.”¹⁹⁷ But the climate of the Christiania church was still worse.

Back in Christiania

Tuesday, July 6, 1886, John G. Matteson and O. A. Olsen arrived from Copenhagen, Denmark. The very next day White had a very serious talk with them telling them that the time had come for decided action and change. At this private meeting Matteson told White that a certain woman had confessed to lying and to having accused another of stealing. Said Mrs. White, “Her tongue seems set on fire of hell,” yet Matteson had placed this woman on the church board, a position she still retained.¹⁹⁸ White continued by saying that there were those who claimed to be led by the Spirit of God “blackening characters, inspiring others with their malicious tongues, accusing and condemning.” Then she said that these people carried these things “to the door of their

¹⁹⁵MS 66, 1886.

¹⁹⁶MS 57, 1886.

¹⁹⁷MS 66, 1886.

¹⁹⁸MS 57, 1886.

neighbors, and they listen to the words of the false tongue, which is bearing false witness and is guilty of slander.” She maintained that their “tongues are set on fire of hell and are uncontrollable; no one, not even the messenger of God who bears them the truth, is spared.” White continued, “There is a time to speak and there is a time to forbear, but sin is to be called by its right name.” She then advised them by saying: “God will not bless this church unless these things are taken hold of and dealt with according to Bible rules. If they do not repent and reform, then they should be separated from the church, for they greatly weaken the church.”¹⁹⁹

Ellen G. White “talked decidedly in regard to this matter and showed them the way they had neglected to do their duty. . . . This work has been neglected and the reputation of the truth greatly demerited by the very ones who claim to believe it.”²⁰⁰

She also told them that she regretted coming to Christiania, since they were not willing to do their duty. “There seems to be no chance for me to get hold of the situation unless I plainly show how matters in the church have been left lax and loose, and sinners have had their own way and done as they pleased, if they felt like it.”²⁰¹ She reminded them that Achan’s sin had been committed in secret yet brought defeat upon Israel. The sin, however, in the Christiania church had been open and well known, but nothing had been done to root it out.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹MS 66, 1886.

²⁰⁰MS 57, 1886.

²⁰¹MS 66, 1886.

²⁰²MS 66, 1886.

Matteson and Olsen now suggested that Ellen G. White should speak to the church about the matter. She declined since the responsibility was not hers but theirs. White “told them it would do no good” if she spoke to the church, since this was a neglected work which should have been done by the elders themselves, for God was speaking to them as he had spoken to Joshua, “Neither will I be with you any more except ye destroy the accursed from among you” (Josh 7:12).²⁰³

Her First Board Meeting with the Christiania Seventh-day Adventist Church

Board meetings for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Christiania commenced on Thursday, July 8, 1886. During these meetings Ellen G. White addressed the problems and issues which had been plaguing the church for years. On Sabbath, July 10, she spoke to the church on the need of thorough conversion before a believer could become righteous, reminding her audience of the “solemn scenes of the judgment.”²⁰⁴

These meetings were meant to prepare the church for what it had to face to solve its problems. Now the church had to answer the all-important question: whether it was interested in a true conversion with striking evidence of the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit to change men into the image of God, or not. True conversion would at the same time reveal the church as a vindication of God’s law. But so far it had been impossible to convince the great majority in the church of sin, the indispensable prerequisite for true conversion. The marvelous light brought by the messenger of the Lord that could have illumined the church and brought it into God’s favor had been rejected by leaders and

²⁰³MS 57, 1886.

²⁰⁴MS 57, 1886; MS 66, 10 July 1886.

laity alike. Hence a dense darkness covered the church with a shroud of unbelief.

Therefore a great work needed to be done for it, not only by God, but especially by the leaders as well.

Ellen G. White told the leaders that this time she “would not get under the church” as she had done during her first visit last November. She stated that it would be very hard “to put a new mold upon a people when they have been permitted to go on year after year in a demoralized condition.” Real reformation would be effected only if leaders would stay “long enough to get hold of the inward working of things and then begin to reconstruct, to remodel” instead of having people come from America and “rush from place to place and rush out of Europe” believing they could do any great amount of good. “It must be work, hard work, constant work, effort made upon effort, by pen, by voice, by influence, line upon line, precept upon precept, until the leaven of reform leavens the lump.” Only minutes after saying this, Mrs. White would face the church board. She concluded by saying, if “God will help me I will set this matter before them in its aggravating character as God sees it.” She would not leave this place until she could do this and “free my soul from this burden.”²⁰⁵

Sunday morning, July 11, at nine o’clock, Mrs. White met with the church board and the trustees of the building society. True Sabbath observance was on her mind. She was also going to talk about matters in the church which “had been tolerated and had disfigured the work and brought the truth into disrepute.” In the meeting her speech was direct, plain, and simple and “left no chance for misunderstanding.”²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵MS 57, 1886.

²⁰⁶Letter 113, 1886.

Mrs. White's opening words at the meeting were those of grateful recognition and thankfulness for the advancement of the work in Norway. She also expressed her appreciation for the new church building. Having said this she reminded the members of the fact that she was a prophet of the Lord and what she was about to say came from him, since it had been revealed to her before she ever came to Europe. She told them that an angel had asked her to observe how worship was conducted in the church on the Sabbath. While prayers were offered and during the sermon she could hear the sound of a hammer, anvil, and chisel. The angel told her that this was an offense to God. While in America she had not understood what it meant, but after coming to Christiania she realized that it came from the blacksmith's shop that was situated in the basement of the adjacent old building, inside the enclosed court, and close by it was a marble shop. The new church building occupied only a part of the church property. Another part of the property had been rented out for the past six years to a blacksmith and to a marble shop that manufactured monuments and tombstones. "Now if you had been in a right connection with God," White said, "you could never have heard these sounds that I have heard upon the Sabbath day and yet felt you were in a right condition before God." She then told them that if they did not have control of these premises they should have erected the church building elsewhere, because of the disturbance on the Sabbath. But in this case the matter was "under your control and right on your own premises, and yet your sensibilities are not aroused to it, although it is right under your eye." She continued: "Do not think that the means that you obtain from this blacksmith shop and marble works will advance the work of God, for it will not. The God of heaven will not accept means obtained in any such a way, [for] it is an offense to Him." She also stated: "You could not have allowed

these things to have gone on like this for years had you had sensitive consciences. You must have altogether different consciences.”²⁰⁷

Since White had a keen sense of the conflict which every soul must wage with the agencies of evil that are continually seeking to deceive and ensnare, she again mentioned that she had seen accounts that were being settled up and business that was being conducted on the Sabbath, simply because it was convenient. Here she used Daniel as an example of a man who did not accommodate himself to the circumstances. Making faith a matter of convenience would place the church on the enemy’s side in the long run. She told the members to “cut loose from all things” that caused any infringement of the law of God.

Next she confronted the sin of gossip. “There has been the evil work of the tale-bearer and meddler going on; and these things have been passed over as a slight thing.” She told the members that “they were guilty of these things, because they allowed it,” causing “the frown of God to rest upon the church.” In conclusion she said, “Just as soon as you begin to humble yourselves before God, then He will come in and work for you,” provided that they would at the same time allow the truth to sanctify them fully.²⁰⁸

The prophet had spoken. In her diary she noted: “I was weak as a child after bearing the plain testimony, bearing plain testimonies affects me much. I always dislike giving pain, but when I see evil, and its tendency to weaken and destroy church discipline where it exists, I cannot hold my peace. I have to speak and in the name of the Lord seek

²⁰⁷*HS*, 66.

²⁰⁸*MS* 7, 1886, a report of Mrs. White’s remarks before the church board.

to repress the incoming tide of evil, that it shall not overwhelm the church and make them an offense to God.”²⁰⁹

White had told the committee members that she was not sure how they would receive her message and since they were unaware of their own condition, they might view her words as “idle tales.” The atmosphere must have been rather tense. She noted a little later the following: “I had reined myself up; every nerve was strained to the utmost.”²¹⁰

Lars Hansen and some others stood up the moment she finished her remarks. Hansen spoke on behalf of the others and said that her words had not been understood as idle tales. He then said: “I receive them, and believe the truth has been spoken to us this morning and I thank Sister White for saying them.” Then all in the room responded sincerely and gladly saying: “We receive these words and mean to act upon them.” This hearty response was a great relief to White. She wrote: “These testimonies from my brethren I accept. They do me good; I shall not regret coming to Christiania if the church will be instructed and will make a decided change throughout her borders.”²¹¹ White also commented: “I am sure the work is going forward here and becoming established upon a higher, nobler basis. I hope we will have wisdom and grace to do all that is needed to be done, all that we can do at the present time.”²¹² She “expected there will be change.”²¹³

²⁰⁹MS 66, 1886.

²¹⁰Letter 113, 1886; MS 66, 1886.

²¹¹Letter 113, 1886; MS 66, 1886.

²¹²Letter 19a, 1886.

²¹³Letter 113, 1886.

Ellen G. White was especially happy and thankful for Lars Hansen's acknowledgment, because she had "felt so strongly for him." Her letters had been "close, earnest, and yet in love," imploring him to save his soul. He had appreciated her letters greatly and now she felt that she "could fall down upon [her] knees and thank God for this token of good."²¹⁴

The evening of the same day, White held a meeting for the whole church, during which she made her final appeal to the most active talkers. She reminded the audience of the fate of Israel when they set their hearts against Jesus Christ. They had received much light during his stay on earth, but by rejecting it, passed their time of probation. After the meeting she wrote: "Well, I think my labors here in public speaking are now ended. I must yet labor with the church, then I leave them until the judgment, never expecting to see their faces again after I leave them."²¹⁵

Second Board Meeting

Monday night, July 12, White was present for a second church board meeting. That morning she wrote that tonight she would "labor with the church in regard to talkers in the church."²¹⁶ At this meeting she expected action. It became a stormy meeting. Mrs. White said: "There was not the wisest course taken."²¹⁷

Matteson was in charge of the meeting. A spirit of harshness and severity, combativeness and retaliation soon was seen, instead of sorrow, pity, and love for the

²¹⁴Letter 113, 1886.

²¹⁵Ibid.

²¹⁶Letter 19a, 1886.

²¹⁷MS 66, July 12, 1886.

three members who were to be disfellowshipped that night. The offending ones became defiant, accusing their fellow members as so often before. White said that they “manifested a satanic spirit.” The climate was such that when Matteson called for a vote of dismissal only a few voted in favor of expulsion of the three members. Some did not vote at all, and others who had been in favor of taking action and who had expressed grief at the course taken by these men were silent. Upon the action of the board Matteson publicly resigned as the leading elder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Christiania, as well as the president of the publishing association. Commented White: “Thus matters were in a bad jumble.” What now became apparent to all was that the church in Christiania was holding together “like ropes of sand; . . . there was no real, genuine harmony and unity . . . but few had any real sense of the order that should exist in the church and they had no real sense of sacred and eternal things.” As a matter of fact, White thought they “were very bad representatives of the truth before the world.”²¹⁸

The very next day both Ellen G. White and her son W. C. White talked for a long time with Matteson. They managed to persuade him not to lay down his responsibilities for the time being. Mrs. White thought they had been able to help him “some on several points.”²¹⁹

On Wednesday, July 14, Ellen G. White spent a very pleasant day with the Hansen family at their summer house on Bygdøy in the vicinity of Christiania. White always felt comfortable in Hansen’s presence, because of the great respect he had for her.

²¹⁸Ibid.

²¹⁹Ibid.

She was sure that the Lord was “drawing him to the light” and she herself wanted to “draw nigh to him and help him all I can.”²²⁰

Thursday night, July 15, 1886, White delivered her last address before leaving the next morning. Her text was taken from Ps 15 where the question is asked: “LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?” and the answer is given: “He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.”²²¹

As usual White went straight to the point: “We all know what mischief an unruly tongue will do if left to run at will.” Then she reminded her audience of a certain lady in the church, without mentioning her name, whose delight was to watch for defects in others and talk unkindly about everybody. “Her words were as cruel as the grave; but still some took real pleasure in listening to these tales that blackened the character of others. Instead of rebuking this evil, they had listened to the scandals, and in this way they had themselves become just as guilty as the one who did the talking.” Some in the church were “suffering martyrdom from these unruly tongues.” White declared that “if tonight I can speak words strong enough to arouse you to see the evil that the unruly tongues amongst you are doing in the church, I shall be thankful that I came to Christiania at this time.”²²²

²²⁰Letter 113, 1886.

²²¹MS 26, 1886, “Evil Speaking,” a sermon.

²²²Ibid.

The last part of the sermon she devoted to the topic of Sabbath-keeping, reminding the members of the “importance of strict obedience to God’s commandments.” She told about a young man in Basel, Switzerland, who decided to keep the Sabbath, no matter what the cost would be, maintaining that “God has not given the commandments so that we can change them to suit our convenience.” Her concluding words were: “You may say that you cannot keep the Sabbath and attend your business. Then change your business whatever the consequences may be.” God did not ask you whether or not it was convenient to keep the Sabbath. “He asks you to keep it at whatever the cost.”²²³ The meeting lasted until late in the evening because of many testimonies. The night was closed with prayers by Matteson and Olsen. White concluded in her diary: “The work was just begun in the church.”²²⁴ Almost a year would pass before her next visit to Norway.

Ellen G. White’s Third and Last Visit to Norway

Ellen G. White’s third and last visit to Norway began on Thursday, June 9, and ended Wednesday, June 22, 1887. The occasion was a Seventh-day Adventist tent camp meeting at Bellevue Grove, Jeløen, near Moss, a town of 7,000 population. According to an advertisement in the local newspaper, *Moss Tilskuer* (Moss onlooker), the Adventist camp meeting commenced on Wednesday, June 8, and lasted until June 14. There would be speakers from America, England, Germany, Switzerland, and other Scandinavian countries. The public was especially invited to attend the Sabbath and Sunday meetings at

²²³Ibid.

²²⁴Ibid.

half past ten in the forenoon, half past two in the afternoon, and eight o'clock in the evening. There would be lectures on prophetic fulfillments, signs of the times, and Christ's second coming.²²⁵

Ellen G. White's previous efforts for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Christiania had been very taxing and tiring both mentally and physically for her. Now in the town of Moss of 7,000 inhabitants she would have the joy of attending her first camp meeting ever held in Europe and witness the establishment of the first Norwegian Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway, with fine weather amid most beautiful surroundings.

Voyage from Denmark to Norway

Ellen G. White left Copenhagen, Denmark, Wednesday, June 8, on the steamer *Melchior*, bound for Horten, Norway, a little town on the opposite side of the Christiania Fiord from Moss.²²⁶ The voyage from Copenhagen began quietly, but in the afternoon the weather worsened and the sea grew rough. Concerning the night at sea she wrote:

This was one of the most precious nights of my life. I enjoyed sweet communion with God and the presence of the Lord and angels, seemed to be in my stateroom. . . . I had a sleepless night, suffered with fever and pain, yet my soul was filled with the thoughts of God's mercy and His precious promises. . . . I could say with heart and soul – "I love Jesus, I love my heavenly Father." I felt that I was breathing the atmosphere of heaven.

I offered fervent and earnest prayer that I might not be content with momentary flashes of heavenly light, but continually have spiritual illuminations.²²⁷

²²⁵ *Moss Tilskuer* (Moss onlooker), Saturday, June 4, 1887.

²²⁶ Delafield, 299.

²²⁷ MS 33, 1887.

At Horten, Thursday morning, a rowboat took her ashore to wait an hour for another steamer to take her across the fiord to Moss, where she arrived about noon Thursday, June 9, 1887. On reaching Moss, she went straight to the place where the meetings were to be held at Bellevue and Balaklava on Jeløy, very close to Moss. She thought the pine grove which had been chosen for the meetings and where the tents had been pitched was very beautiful.²²⁸

A Seventh-day Adventist Church
Organized at Moss, Norway

Before looking at the Moss camp meeting as such, it may be appropriate to introduce the newly established Seventh-day Adventist Church in Moss. More than five years earlier, from January 16 to 21, 1882, J. G. Matteson had lectured on prophecies and Christ's second coming in Moss at Karl Petersen's Gaard (Court), Stengaden.²²⁹ His impression of the people in Moss was that "most of them are very little informed about the word of God and neither do they want to be informed."²³⁰ Here, nevertheless, he met a lady who had kept the Sabbath for some time.²³¹

In the autumn of 1886 and during the early months of 1887, Elder O. A. Olsen and his brother Elder Edward G. Olsen had conducted public meetings in Moss,

²²⁸MS 34, 1887.

²²⁹*Moss Tilskuer* (Moss onlooker), January 14, 1882.

²³⁰John G. Matteson, "Moss," *Tidernes Tegn* (Signs of the times), February 1, 1882, 24.

²³¹John G. Matteson: "Norge," *Advent Tidende* (Advent Tidings) 4 (1882): 42, 43.

assisted by Kristine Dahl as a Bible worker.²³² In the autumn of 1886 the Olsen brothers used a tent for these meetings in accordance with a resolution taken at the third session of the European Missionary Council in Basel, Switzerland, September 1885, to buy tents for evangelistic meetings. One tent was therefore bought for Scandinavia.²³³ The use of tents for evangelistic efforts had also been discussed by John G. Matteson and O. A. Olsen during meetings in Christiania in July 1886.²³⁴

Reporting to B. L. Whitney, Elder O. A. Olsen said that he had never witnessed a more friendly and sincere people than in Moss during his campaign there. He thought he had nowhere been able to present the message in a more direct manner or in a shorter time than here.²³⁵

The first Sabbath in February 1887, O. A. Olsen baptized eight persons from Moss. They were baptized in Christiania, since these eight were the very first ones baptized from Moss. No church had yet been organized there, nor was there a church building there. Seven more persons were baptized by the end of March.²³⁶

²³²Kristine Dahl to E.G. White, September 18, 1886. A “Bible worker” was a person who supported the public meetings by visiting people in their homes and teaching them further on Bible doctrine and practice.

²³³*HS*, 116, 117.

²³⁴*RH*, 17 August 1886.

²³⁵*HS*, 274.

²³⁶Erling Abrahamsen, *Moss Syvendedags Adventistmenighe: Kort oversikt over dens historie grunnet på stiftelsesprotokollen og andre kilder fra den tid* (The Seventh-day Adventist Church of Moss: Short overview concerning its history based on the record of establishment and other sources from that time) (Unpublished MS, CAR, 1973), 2.

On March 19, 1887, a Seventh-day Adventist Church was organized at Moss with fifteen charter members.²³⁷ Knud Brorson was elected elder of the church. The next day Elder Brorson by a written statement²³⁸ requested the local authorities to recognize him as the elder of the newly established dissenter church in the town of Moss called “the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Moss.”²³⁹ The day after the authorities received his request, the County Council granted recognition to Brorson and his church on March 21, 1887.²⁴⁰

The wording of the covenant the members entered into was as follows: “We, the undersigned, brothers and sisters, hereby enter into a covenant with one another to keep God’s Commandments and the faith of Jesus.”²⁴¹

It must have been a thrilling experience for the newly born Seventh-day Adventist Church in Moss to host the first camp meeting in Europe, and at the same time host the fifth annual session of the European Missionary Council, witness the establishment of the first Seventh-day Adventist Conference in Norway, and have the messenger of the Lord, Ellen G. White, as their special guest speaker.

²³⁷Emanuel Pedersen was most likely baptized March 27, 1887, and admitted to the church April 16 as the fifteenth charter member, although that was after the church had been organized. Notwithstanding, he was regarded as one of the charter members, hence the number of the charter members should be 15 and not 14 as some have suggested. See Erling Abrahamsen, 2.

²³⁸*Smålenenes Amt, Journal* (Smalenen’s County journal) nr. 29 1886–1888, sak (case) nr. 1519, March 1887, Statsarkivet Oslo, Norway.

²³⁹Erling Abrahamsen, 2.

²⁴⁰*Smålenenes Amt, kopibok* (Smalenen’s County copy book) August 18, 1886–April 25, 1887, fol. 653, Statsarkivet, Oslo, Norway.

²⁴¹Erling Abrahamsen, 1.

Overview of the Main Meetings at Moss in June 1887

The meetings at Bellevue pine grove near Moss, Norway, included four distinct meetings.

1. The first Seventh-day Adventist Conference in Norway was established on Friday, June 10. The conference consisted of four churches and about 200 members.²⁴²
2. Camp meeting was held on the Sabbath and Sunday, June 11 and 12.
3. A meeting of the Scandinavian conference leaders took place on Monday, June 13.²⁴³
4. The fifth annual session of the European Missionary Council took place from Tuesday, June 14, through Friday, June 17.²⁴⁴

Many visitors attended the meetings from far and near and from abroad. In addition to Ellen G. White, there were W. C. White, S. N. Haskell, B. L. Whitney, J. H. Waggoner, William Ings, L. Conradi, C. L. Boyd, and D. A. Robinson. Boyd and Robinson were on their way to Africa as the very first Adventist missionaries to that continent.²⁴⁵

²⁴²Øivind Gjertsen, “1878-1978 et historisk tilbakeblikk,” *Evangeliets Sendebud*, no. 11, 1978, 11; Øivind Gjertsen, “The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway,” chapter in Sigmund Skard, ed., *Americana Norvegia–Norwegian Contribution to American Studies* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press/Universitetet I Oslo, 1968), 2:85.

²⁴³MS 34, 1887, Diary for June 13, 1887.

²⁴⁴MS 34, 1887; Letter 14, 1887.

²⁴⁵ML, 267.

The Establishment of the First Seventh-day Adventist Conference in Norway

The first Norwegian Conference was organized Friday, June 10, 1887, consisting of four churches: Christiania (1879), Drammen (1885), Larvik (1886), and Moss (1887) with a total membership of 205. Ole Andres Olsen, a native son of Norway, was elected president.²⁴⁶ O. A. Olsen had been born at Skogen near Kristiansand South, but in 1850 when he was five years old, his parents moved to the United States and settled on a farm in Oakland Township, Wisconsin, as stated in chapter 1. At the age of nine, he with his parents began to keep the Sabbath and were baptized together in 1858 as mentioned in chapters 1 and 2.²⁴⁷

At the General Conference session held in Battle Creek, October 18, 1889, “the Norwegian Conference was admitted to the sisterhood of conferences.”²⁴⁸ This completed a remarkable circle of historical events in the origin, development, and establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Norway. In 1850, O. A. Olsen’s father Andrew Olsen had left Norway because of his faith in the Bible as the true word of God, which among other things stated that the seventh-day Sabbath was the only true day of

²⁴⁶Øvind Gjertsen, “1878-1978 et historisk tilbakeblikk,” *Evangeliets Sendebud*, no. 11, 1978, 11.

²⁴⁷Ole Andres Olsen “served as the president of the Wisconsin (1880–1881), Dakota (1882–1883), Minnesota (1883–1885), and Iowa (1884–1885) conferences.” In 1886 he became the president of the Danish Conference and in 1887 became the first president of the newly established Norwegian Conference. In 1888, he was elected president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, a post he held for nine years. “In 1901 he was asked to head the work in Great Britain. In 1905 he went to Australia, where he served as union president for four years. In 1909 he was made secretary of the North American Foreign Department of the General Conference, and in 1913 was elected vice president of the North American Division, the post he filled until stricken with a heart attack, Jan. 29, 1915.” *SDA Encyclopedia*, 1996 ed., s.v. “Olsen, Ole Andres,” “Norway,” and “General Conference.”

worshipping God as man's Creator and Savior. Now thirty-seven years later, with the Bible still as the only guiding light, his firstborn son had been chosen as the first president of the first Norwegian Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The circular crown of remarkable historical events of thirty-seven years had come to full turn. Seventh-day Adventism had come to stay in Norway.

O. A. Olsen was succeeded by the Danish-American Lewis Johnson who took his place as conference president from 1889 to 1899. During his time as president, churches were organized in the following towns: Hadsel (1895), Arendal and Halden (1892), Trondheim and Stavanger (1892), Bergen, Fredrikstad, and Vardø (1895), Porsgrun, Hamar, Kristiansand, Horten, Mandal, and Tromsø (1897), Lille Vandev (1898), and Gjøvik (1898/1899). In 1899 the members numbered 628.

The First European Adventist Camp Meeting

As nightfall was approaching on Friday, June 10, 1887, Ellen G. White noted that "many are coming to the meeting." The following morning she addressed the Sabbath school. She was very happy to see "so goodly a number represented in the Sabbath school," and that all "the children looked bright and interested."²⁴⁹

John G. Matteson preached at the divine service that morning. Early in the afternoon Ellen G. White spoke again to a full tent; not everyone was able to secure a seat. Her sermon, based on Matt 7:21, emphasized that everyday life should reflect the profession of Christ. "Those who really believe in God will show by their actions that

²⁴⁸SDAE, s.v. "Norway" and "General Conference."

²⁴⁹MS 34, 1887, Diary for June 10, 11, 1887.

they are the children of God,” she said. “We want at this first camp meeting that has been held in Europe, that God shall reveal his power among us.”²⁵⁰

After she finished her discourse she invited those who wanted to give themselves to Jesus Christ for the first time, as well as any who were backslidden, to come forward for a special prayer. She noted in her diary that a “large number presented themselves . . . and good testimonies were born with weeping.”²⁵¹ After prayer, smaller groups gathered in the tents for worship, and there was a special meeting for the children.

The next day, Sunday, being a public holiday, drew a large crowd to the camp site. White noted in her diary: “The attendance at camp from outsiders was good. The tent was crowded within and without.”²⁵²

On this occasion one of the American Adventist pioneers from the 1850s, Joseph H. Waggoner, addressed the crowd. The *Morgenposten* reported that “in the forenoon a defense was made of their practice of keeping holy the seventh day.” Matteson, who translated, said Waggoner had spoken “with that clearness and logical power that was special for him,” thus making a deep impression on the listeners.²⁵³

Mrs. White spoke again at half past two in the afternoon, on Christ’s ascension and second coming. The congregation of “more than 1000 people” included many persons of other faiths. She observed that “there was no noise of confusion, but respectful

²⁵⁰MS 17, 1887; E. G. White, “Praise Glorifies God,” *RH*, February 14, 1887, 97.

²⁵¹MS 34, 1887, Diary for June 11, 1887.

²⁵²MS 34, 1887, Diary for June 12, 1887.

²⁵³*Christiania Nyheds- og Avertissements-Blad* (“*Morgenposten*”) (Christiana News- and Advertisements’ Paper [Morning Mail]), Wednesday June 15, 1887, 26; *ML*, 268.

listening to the words spoken.” She thought she had never seen “a more intelligent-looking audience in America at any of our tent meetings,” and she felt she had been strengthened to speak “in the power and demonstration of the Spirit.”²⁵⁴

Sunday afternoon, Matteson refuted allegations of the local Lutheran pastor Frantz Bruin that had appeared in the local newspaper, *Moss Tilskuer*, and the Christiania *Aftenposten*, concerning Adventist teachings on the second coming of Christ, the heavenly sanctuary, the Sabbath, and the state of the dead. Mrs. White observed that Matteson’s presentation brought “good results.”²⁵⁵

Reflecting later on this camp meeting, White recalled the expressions of many people that “the blessing of the Lord rested upon the encampment from early morning until night.” She was also pleased with the order of the camp, and that the visitors from the town had noticed that all the meetings had been free from the “noisy demonstrations and fierce excitement” that often characterized so-called revival meetings. White concluded: “We can but pronounce this meeting a marked success.” Matteson agreed that “this first camp meeting was particularly successful and a great blessing for the cause.”²⁵⁶

²⁵⁴*Christiania Nyheds- og Avertissements-Blad* (“*Morgenposten*”) (Christiania News- and Advertisements’ Paper [Morning Mail]), Wednesday June 15, 1887, 26; MS 34, 1887, Diary for June 12, 1887.

²⁵⁵Frantz Bruun, “Leirmøtet i Moss” (Camp-Meeting in Moss), *Moss Tilskuer* (Moss onlooker), June 11, 1887, 1; Frantz Bruun, “Leirmøtet i Moss” (Camp-Meeting in Moss) *Aftenposten* (Evening mail), June 10, 1887, 4; MS 34, Diary for June 12, 1887. Matteson also wrote an article refuting Pastor Bruin’s charges. J. G. Matteson, “Svar til Pastor Frantz Bruuns Artikkel om Leirmøtet i Moss” (Answer to Pastor Frantz Bruun’s article about the camp meeting in Moss), *Moss Tiskuer* (Moss onlooker), June 21, 1887, 1, 2.

²⁵⁶*Ibid.*; *ML*, 269.

An unnamed correspondent from *Christiania Nyheds- og Avertissements-Blad* (“*Morgenposten*”) visited the Moss camp meeting and wrote that the Adventists “hire the ground, arrange regular streets, and appoint everyone a place for his tent. They have a plan of the grounds by the help of which everyone can be easily found. It is a perfectly organized temporary city.”²⁵⁷ The correspondent noted the

large tent for the congregation, sixty feet long and forty feet wide, arranged in strictest harmony with the precepts of the Lord to Moses. We found also some small tents, in which about one hundred persons lived. The tents are very fine and pleasant, and generally arranged for two families. At first we enter a small every-day room, which stretches across the whole breadth of the tent, and is covered with carpet. The walls are decorated with green leaves and flowers. Altogether we received the impression that the people occupying these tents must be an economical and well-to-do people.

After describing “the dwelling tents, a tent for sale of books, and a tent where victuals could be obtained,” the correspondent “went on to give a glowing report of Adventist work, not only in Scandinavia, but in other parts of the world as well.”²⁵⁸

Conference Meeting of Scandinavian Leaders

Monday, June 13, brought long business meetings concerning the work in Scandinavia. The economic situation in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden had caused much distress and discomfort from the very start, and this had been one of the many problems Matteson had had to struggle with.

When Ellen G. White was at Örebro, Sweden, she wrote to G. I. Butler (SDA General Conference president) that the “people here are generally poor,” adding: “I think

²⁵⁷The article in *Christiania Nyheds- og Avertissements-Blad* (“*Morgenposten*”), June 15, 1887, was translated into English and published in *RH*, August 2, 1887. The reference here is from the *RH* translation of the article.

²⁵⁸Delafield, 301.

the believers have thought themselves too poor to do anything.” She knew that people generally only paid Matteson for his travel expenses and that more was needed. She said: The people “need to be educated to systematic benevolence, to the tithing system. This will be for their spiritual interest and for the growth of the work.”²⁵⁹ This therefore became the main theme of discussion during the long business session on Monday. As the discussions went on, the Norwegian believers began to view the matter differently and when the vote was called for there was a unanimous support in favor of the resolution to introduce the tithing system. Mrs. White remarked that “Advancements were made over any previous meetings that had been held in these regions.”²⁶⁰

The Fifth European Missionary Council

Tuesday morning, June 14, the people who had come for the camp meeting left²⁶¹ and the European Council opened its session. According to Ellen G. White’s diary, her presentations to the council were almost exclusively devoted to the need for proper education of the workers of the mission fields. As early as 1884, she had pointed out to J. N. Andrews in Switzerland, J. N. Loughborough in England, and John G. Matteson in Norway that they had all failed in developing promising talents and potential workers. She said: “This is the work which should have been done, but which you left undone.”²⁶² She also said: “If God has called men to be laborers together with him, it is equally

²⁵⁹Letter 117, 1886.

²⁶⁰MS 34, June 13, 1887.

²⁶¹*Christiania Nyheds- og Avertissements-Blad* (“*Morgenposten*”), Wednesday, June 15, 1887, 26.

²⁶²Letter 10, 1884.

certain that he has called them to make the best possible preparation to rightly represent the sacred, elevating truths of his word.”²⁶³

Her next comment is pedagogically of great importance: “When an effort is made to introduce the truth in an important place, our ministers should give special attention to the instruction and training of those who are to co-operate with them. . . . There should be less preaching and more teaching.” She also observed that “much has been lost to the cause by the defective labors of men who possess ability, but who have not had proper training.” Without adequate training, evangelistic workers had only meager results. This lack of success caused administrators to become discouraged and cut back the wages of the workers, who then left the field for other employment. Examples included Andrew Brorsen and J. B. Jespersen.²⁶⁴

Apparently the Council was trying to learn from these mistakes, since education of workers was also discussed the following day. Again it was deplored that men had been sent without adequate training “either in school education or in Bible knowledge.”²⁶⁵ It was therefore suggested that each candidate for a ministerial license should first be “critically examined in his knowledge of Scriptures before being sent into the field to teach others.”²⁶⁶ Finally the Council passed a resolution encouraging individuals “to go to the best institutions of learning, that they may become acquainted

²⁶³ *HS*, 280.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 281, 283; *MS* 34, 1887, Diary for June 15, 1887.

²⁶⁵ *MS* 34, 1887, Diary for June 15, 1887.

²⁶⁶ *MS* 34, 1887, Diary for June 15, 16, 1887.

with the theories of those who may oppose the truth, and to act as missionaries.”²⁶⁷ The Fifth European Missionary Council officially ended Friday, June 17, 1887.

Ellen G. White’s Last Days in Norway

Sabbath, June 18, 1887, J. G. Matteson spoke in the morning and Ellen G. White in the afternoon. Mrs. White’s last meeting in Norway, on Sunday afternoon, was a public talk on Christian temperance. The content of this lecture was very similar to that of her presentation at the Fortress Gymnasium in Christiania, November 8, 1885.²⁶⁸

About the meetings at Moss, Matteson wrote: “The Lord blessed our efforts greatly. Hearts were strengthened and encouraged, and the influence of this meeting will long be a blessing to our souls. . . . We have never before in any council been so much encouraged, nor seen so many fields open before us. Truly, the fields are white for the harvest.”²⁶⁹

Monday morning, June 20, 1887, a three-hour train trip took Ellen G. White from Moss to Christiania. She felt keenly the strain of her work. “I lay down and slept some,” she said in her diary, “but a great weariness is upon me.” She stayed at O. A. Olsen’s place where she “had a good convenient chance to rest.” She was “nearly completely exhausted” and had had more or less no appetite since she arrived in Norway.”²⁷⁰

²⁶⁷ *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1888), 64.

²⁶⁸ MS 18, 1887.

²⁶⁹ Matteson, “Northern Europe,” *RH*, July 26, 1887, 474.

²⁷⁰ MS 34, 1887, Diary for June 20, 1887.

Tuesday, Mrs. White was invited on a carriage ride by Elder Ings and his wife and Anna Rasmussen, to see the castle Oscarshall on Bygdoy and a 700-year-old church there. White said she “felt better for the ride.”²⁷¹

Wednesday she spent much time outdoors. She rose early and went for a walk to a nearby cemetery called Vår Frelzers Gravlund. Here she thought of the resurrection at the second coming of Christ. Later that day she was again invited for a seven-mile ride with Christina Dahl, Mrs. Olsen, and the Ingses. Among other places, they took Mrs. White to where they had “a very grand view of Christiania,” most likely to the beautiful Holmenkollen hills. After the ride, she was hungry and “enjoyed the meal for the first time since leaving Basel,” Switzerland. The last thing she did before leaving for Stockholm, and then for America, was to have a “very plain talk” with Christina Dahl. She seemed always to have time for the individual as well as the church and its leadership.²⁷²

During Ellen G. White’s stay in Norway, only eight days were blessed with sunshine. In her diary she also noted: “It is rather difficult to tell how to sleep as the sun does not set until half past nine, and arises at half past two a.m. We get a little confused in regard to sleeping hours.”²⁷³

Ellen G. White’s Later Ministry to Norway

Ellen G. White never forgot Norway. The publishing house in Christiania soon became the publishing center for Scandinavia. For years the financial situation was stable, and the publishing house solvent. However, by the middle of the 1890s a financial

²⁷¹MS 34, 1887, Diary for June 21, 1887.

²⁷²MS 34, 1887, Diary for June 22, 1887.

crisis was arising. After 1897, the economic situation worsened still, until the debt became twice the amount of all assets, including the building itself. The publishing house had no way out of the crisis but to contact the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the USA. But the need was too great even for the central headquarters of the church. A delegation came from the USA to examine the situation in Norway. Their initial report called for the publishing house to suspend its operations and file for bankruptcy. But even if the creditors had taken over all the assets, including the building at Akersgaten 74, the assets would have fallen short of covering the debt, and the creditors would have lost a lot of money.

As church leaders in the USA reevaluated the recommendation of bankruptcy, they introduced a new proposal by which the creditors would lose only the interest and not their total capital investment. If the debt could be paid within three years, the church would retain the building; or if not, it might be sold to meet the claims. This proposal was accepted by the creditors. At the same time it was resolved to take up an offering in all Seventh-day Adventist churches in the USA to help the publishing house.

Ellen G. White wrote two appeals to the Seventh-day Adventist churches in the USA on behalf of the publishing house in Norway. The first appeal was to have been published in connection with the week of prayer in 1900, but the written appeal reached many of the churches only after the week of prayer, hence the offering was very meager and of too little help. Mrs. White then wrote a second appeal which was published in the church paper *Review and Herald*, March 19, 1901. Here she gave a thorough description of the gravity of the situation in Norway, and called for a special offering to be taken up

²⁷³MS 34, 1887, Diary for June 22, 1887.

on July 1, 1901. This time the money collected was more than enough to cover the first installment on the debt. She also wrote to the workers in Norway advising them how they could find further solutions to the financial problem. In time, the church paid off its debt and the crisis passed. The creditors got their money and the Norwegian business community's confidence in the Adventist Church was reestablished. The strength of the global organization of the church had proved its benefits. The global organization had saved a local part of its international body. The limb on its own would never have been able to survive the crisis.²⁷⁴ The Seventh-day Adventist Church had come to stay and grow in Norway.

Matteson's Closing Work in Scandinavia

As noted above, during the Fifth European Missionary Council, Ellen G. White had reiterated her earlier advice of 1884, calling for better education for ministerial workers. Acting on this counsel, Matteson and O. A. Olsen in 1886 decided to establish in Stockholm and Christiania, schools for ministers and colporteurs.²⁷⁵

Matteson operated one such school in Stockholm for three months in the spring of 1886 with financial support of \$100 from Dr. J. H. Kellogg in America, to which Matteson added the rest of operating costs from his own private pocket.²⁷⁶ Twenty students attended. The next winter (1887) Matteson continued the school in Stockholm for four months with 30 students. When, in June 1887, Matteson reported to the Fifth

²⁷⁴Edwin Torkelsen, *Ellen G. White i Norge* (Ellen G. White in Norway) (Oslo: Syvendedags adventistenes vestnordiske union, 1987), 26-29.

²⁷⁵*ML*, 271-274.

²⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 272.

European Missionary Council in Moss his “wonderful experience the past winter in educating colporteurs to give Bible meetings,” Mrs. White was pleased with his report.²⁷⁷ In 1888 he taught another 30 students for three months in Copenhagen.²⁷⁸ This was his last effort in Scandinavia before returning to the United States of America in May of 1888.²⁷⁹

When John G. Matteson left Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, he had been instrumental in establishing twenty-four local churches, totaling 1,031 members, and organized into three conferences. He had also established a publishing house which printed four periodicals in two languages, as well as books and tracts.²⁸⁰ According to Chilson, Matteson “established 56 churches” altogether, and “authored nine books.”²⁸¹

Matteson spent his last years as editor and Bible teacher at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska, USA. He died in Santa Monica, California, March 30, 1896. Ole A. Olsen, president of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church at the time of Matteson’s death, paid him the following tribute:

At Brother Matteson’s acceptance of the truth in 1863, the spreading of the message among our countrymen made new headway. He soon started publishing writings which treated upon the different teachings through which one got information about the present truth. Brother Matteson became a mighty tool in the hand of God for the spreading of the truth among our countrymen both in America and at home in Scandinavia.

²⁷⁷MS 34, 1887, Diary for June 18, 1887.

²⁷⁸ML, 276.

²⁷⁹Ibid., 274-276.

²⁸⁰*Seventh-day Adventist Year Book of Statistics for 1889* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1889), 67, 68.

²⁸¹GV, 128.

I have hardly met a man so well equipped of nature to be a blessing for his fellow human beings. He was pleasant to deal with, interesting in conversation, with a rich supply of practical illustrations. As a public speaker I regard him as a model. His preaching was pleasant, logical, convincing and presented with tenderness that won the hearts. In debate he had a ready wit and was feared by opponents. Brother Matteson suffered from poor health, and in spite of that got as much work done as nobody else I have worked with.

Brother Matteson can justly be called the father of our Scandinavian literature in connection with this message; not before the Day of Judgment will the result of his work be revealed, and although dead he still speaks. He also had a marked talent as a musician and wrote and translated many hymns. It was a happy occasion when we got our Danish-Norwegian hymnbook and could sing our own hymns in our own language.

From the beginning to the end, Matteson stood faithfully for the principles of this message. He had many battles to fight and was often placed in difficult circumstances which will befall all those who with all their heart promote this message, and he never wavered. Were it not for his strength of will and determination, he could not with his poor health have accomplished so much and endured so long. His faithful example ought to be of help and encouragement to us all, who participate in this work.

With the passing of Brother Matteson the cause has lost a faithful, godly, and hard working laborer. Personally I feel a great loss, for I could see nobody who could take his place and seize the pen, he had used with such great skill. But the work is the Lord's and to the praise of God, and the believers' gladness we can see that the Truth still moves forward with new power both in America and Europe, and soon will the glorious final closing, which we have waited for, come. Then every faithful hero of the cross will stand in his lot.²⁸²

Summary

Ellen G. White's first visit in 1885 to Christiania, Norway, included a number of public talks and created a large interest in Christiania. The few contemporary sources which reacted to her public messages were very positive. According to White herself, respectful and perfect attention was given her to the close of her discourses. She drew large crowds of listeners of 1,400 to 1,700 people.

²⁸²*ML*, xii, xiv. This is an introduction, written as mentioned above by O. A. Olsen, to Matteson's autobiography in May 1908. The introduction is in Norwegian in Matteson's autobiography and is partially translated in Adriel D. Chilson, *Trial and Triumph on a Western Frontier* (Elko, NV: Heritage Publications, 1976), 40, 41.

Having devoted the first week mainly to public lectures Ellen G. White gave the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Christiania her full attention during her second week in an attempt at intellectual and spiritual reform. During her stay she presented both in writing and lectures the biblical vision of the ideal Christian based on the gospel, the law, and the social and spiritual structure of the brotherhood of man.

In view of the evidence that class antagonism had found a measure of verbal expression in the church, apparently including the majority of the members, and directly and critically involving its leaders, Mrs. White must have felt overwhelmed by her task. At the height of the members' rebellion, it encompassed such a huge negative influence that some of the neighbors thought these new dissenters were not Christians.

The cause of the problems was deeply rooted in the very short history of the church in Christiania. The members themselves were not so much at fault as were Matteson himself and his close associate Lars Hansen. After all, it was Matteson who had led the members into the "truth." They had been led intellectually to accept new and unfamiliar doctrines, and heard a lot about the love of God as it is revealed in Christ, but very little about Christian "duty," to quote Matteson in conversation with White. They were therefore still slaves to the law of sin, because of their unspiritual nature. This was especially reflected in their disrespect for Sabbath observance, since as merely rational beings they could be subject to God's law only outwardly.

During her second stay in Christiania in 1886 the spiritual state of the church was more or less the same. However, in the decisive meeting with the church board, Sunday, July 11, 1886, the board members' decision to act upon her message brought a great relief to Mrs. White. She wrote in her diary, "These testimonies from my brethren I

accepted. They do me good.”²⁸³ Although the work of reform had only begun, there was promise of success.

The immediate results of Mrs. White’s visits in 1885 and 1886 may appear at first glance to have been rather meager within the SDA Church in Christiania, but her visits had important long-term effects, because the members had now seen White and come to know her loving and lovable character, something they inevitably kept in mind when reading her writings in the years to come. They also proudly remembered her stirring public addresses to spellbound audiences containing a highly visible moral stance on temperance, supported by motherly appeals to upright and biblical idealism.

White’s last visit to Norway in 1887 may be viewed as the celebration of her successful “summer harvest” from her hard work in Christiania, Drammen, and Larvik in 1885 and 1886. At this time she did not express once, either in her diary or letters, any negative opinion about the state of the work in Norway. On the contrary, she was very happy with the camp meeting in Moss. The work in Norway was on the right track of reform, because the leaders had taken right actions in accordance with her counsel. She had also succeeded in checking fanaticism and establishing greater respect for the sanctity of the Sabbath.

Hence it is true to say that the Moss camp meeting was indeed Ellen G. White’s crowning fruitage, the yield of her work in Norway, and a joyous spiritual feast marked by the tangible presence of the Holy Spirit. Her two first visits and the lavish spiritual feast at Moss would sustain the church in Norway for years to come.

²⁸³MS 66, July 11, 1886.

Ellen G. White made a considerable mark on church history by her extensive travel, speaking, and writing. Her energetic and fruitful continuation of the process of the Reformation of the sixteenth century and the later Pietism places her as a continuation of the great reformers of the Christian Church.

CHAPTER 6

GENERAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this dissertation was to reconstruct, chronologically, the history of the Norwegian Seventh-day Adventist Church from the Haugian revival of the early 1800s to the establishment of the first Norwegian Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1887. This chapter will first present a summary and then draw general conclusions.

Summary

Historical Background and the Role of the Bible

The common hallmark of the primitive Christian Church, the Celtic Church, the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century, the Pietism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the ministry of Hans Nielsen Hauge, was that the Bible alone is man's only guide in all matters of life present and life eternal. It follows that biblical faith must not just be intellectual but practical, ethical, and spiritual.

All these forerunners emphasized justification by faith alone. But through that justification they believed that they had continual access to the daily baptism of the Holy Spirit which provided them with the necessary willpower and strength of mind to keep the divine law of Ten Commandments and follow the principles of the Gospel. Thus they believed that the atonement secured by Christ's death and resurrection would become

effective in the Christian's personal experience as the fruit of the Holy Spirit, that is, the re-creation of man in God's own image. All this grew from the fact that all the above-mentioned movements of Christian faith held the Scriptures in the greatest veneration.

The Sabbath Experience in Norway and the Bible

The unique Sabbath experience of the seven families¹ from Finsland and Vågsbygd near Christiansand South,² Norway, which led to their immigration to the United States of America in 1849, 1850, and 1856, was not, in their eyes an accident, but Providence. However, this experience might never have taken place had not their confidence in Scripture been so well rooted in their minds by Hans Nielsen Hauge's movement, which had reached its highest point from 1796 to 1804, but was still very influential in the 1840s. Not only the Haugians, but Quakers and Lutherans also furthered these families' religious experience as they prepared to emigrate.

That their destination was Oakland, Wisconsin, does not seem to be accidental either, because these parts of Wisconsin were known by many Norwegians at this time. For example, the Koshkonong area in Jefferson County, Wisconsin, was called Koskeland in Norway. Koshkonong or Koskeland was very close to the fertile and timber-rich Oakland. Therefore both fields of nature and of faith yielded good returns as these families became active Christians and joined the Methodist Church.

¹(1) Anders Olson Rekevik, his wife Berte Olsdotter Øvland, (2) his brother-in-law Søren Olson Øvland, and his wife Gunvor Tomasdotter, (3) Ole Sørensen Øvland, a widower; (4) Bertor Olson Øvland and his wife Kirsti Aanensdotter; (5) Ole Sørensen Heggland and his wife Ingjerd Aanensdotter Reiersdal; (6) Tarald Jensen Fiskaa and his first wife, Andrea Birgitte Sturve; and (7) Halvor Olson Øvland and his wife Aase.

²The present spelling is Kristiansand South.

Sabbath-keeping Methodists and the Bible

By 1855 all the above-mentioned Norwegian families of farmers, except Halvor Olson Øvland and his wife Aase, were living in Oakland, Wisconsin, and had become known as Sabbath-keeping Methodists. Andrew Olsen later referred to their Sabbath experience as “that little beginning in Norway and later in Wisconsin” which eventually grew “into a mighty work” and returned to Norway. Throughout this Sabbath experience, the Bible was the conclusive test for their decision. Andrew Olsen put it this way: “We had the Bible; that was all, and that was enough.” Hence, their observance of the Sabbath was a natural outgrowth of the deep respect and reverence for the Bible so effectively taught by Hans Nielsen Hauge and his followers. The issue of Sabbath observance was one of authority as well as of principle. This is the more remarkable, since Sabbath-keeping was regarded at this time as a Jewish relic of the Old Testament representing salvation by works.

Although, for whatever reason, Andrew Olsen does not mention Gustaf Mellberg in his commemorative article regarding his Sabbath-experience in Oakland, Mellberg’s interest in Sabbath-keeping, his presence in Oakland at the precise time of the re-emerging of the Sabbath question, and his meeting with James White, the leading figure of Sabbath-keeping Adventists at this time, should be kept in mind. It is singularly interesting that James White and Gustaf Mellberg met in June 1854 in Wisconsin, just before the Norwegian families in Oakland once more started searching for the final answer concerning the observance of the Sabbath. This meeting between White and Mellberg may have been instrumental in setting off anew the interest for Sabbath observance among these Norwegian families. Another possible factor that should also be

kept in mind was that Sunday was often referred to as the “Sabbath of the Lord” among English-speaking Protestants in Oakland. This did not sound right in the ears of the Norwegians, since it would undoubtedly have reminded them of Nylund’s previous remarks about the Sabbath in the church in Finsland, Norway, and Rev. Carlsen’s response.

Whatever the antecedents may have been, the fact remains that it was Andrew Olsen and Søren Loe who blazed the trail to the actual practice of Sabbath-keeping in Oakland, Wisconsin, around Easter time in 1855.

The Bible and Baptism by Immersion

Although little is known about why Andrew Olsen did not have his youngest child baptized in Norway just before his immigration to the United States, his decision may nevertheless be indicative of his third vital step away from the State Church. His first step was his firm belief in the Bible as the infallible word of God, and the second was his conviction that the seventh-day Sabbath was the right day for worship.

It is clear, however, that whatever Andrew Olsen and most of the other families considered biblical, this they incorporated into their lives, with a sincere desire to please God according to his revealed will in the Bible. Therefore, they naturally rejected whatever they thought was at variance with Scripture, such as infant baptism. When the Norwegian group at Oakland was faced with the preaching of baptism by immersion, most of them accepted it immediately, since the Bible said so. This in turn, according to Olsen, opened the door to his joining the Sabbath-keeping Adventists. Andrew Olsen said that the subject of baptism by immersion “opened the way for the present truth to be

preached in the community.”³ Thus the “present truth” as expressed in the book of Revelation was established among these Norwegian immigrants when Waterman Phelps presented to them the three angels’ messages of Rev 14:6-12 in 1858.

Although the seven families had laid the foundation of their Christian faith in Norway and had reached a certain point in their Christian experience there, they somehow felt it was not complete until they joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The hallmarks of their Christian experience and advancement may be summed up as follows: (1) the foundation of their Christian experience was laid in Norway when they accepted the Bible as their guiding light making the Christian perception possible; (2) they had to leave Norway for the United States of America because of their biblical views of the Sabbath and probably baptism; (3) they experienced personal Christian conversion when they joined the Methodist Church in Cambridge, Wisconsin; (4) their commencement of practical and spiritual Sabbath-keeping began in the spring and autumn of 1855; (5) they accepted baptism by immersion; (6) they heard and accepted the three angels’ messages of Rev 14; and (7) they formally joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In December 1861, therefore, this body of believers in Oakland, Wisconsin, was ready to organize as a Seventh-day Adventist Church. They could do so, not only because of their Sabbath-keeping Adventist faith, but also because in the spring of that very same year the Sabbath-keeping Adventist leaders in Battle Creek, Michigan, had recommended that the various scattered congregations organize themselves under the name “Seventh-

³Seventh-day Adventists often referred to their beliefs, especially the messages of the three angels of Rev 14, as “present truth” (2 Pet 1:12).

day Adventists.” Thus, order and harmonious action could be maintained and every member could act his or her part. Next, the newly founded church in Oakland needed a minister who spoke one of the three Scandinavian languages.

John G. Matteson

At the same time the Norwegians in Oakland commenced keeping the seventh-day Sabbath in the spring of 1855, John G. Matteson at the age of twenty immigrated to the United States of America. Although brought up as a Lutheran, he was not very impressed with the spiritual and practical exercise of that faith at that time. Yet, the few seedlings sown in his young heart would in time burst the sod and renovate his mind.

After Matteson arrived in America, he spent some years as a hard-working, liquor-drinking, pipe-smoking, atheist or agnostic. But in 1858 he came across the book *Ironthorpe*, which described how simple, practical, and attractive Christianity really is. This book led Matteson to make decisive changes in his life. Reading the book exercised so great an influence upon him that he decided to become a Christian. He now employed the Christian faith with advantage in the re-construction of his former life. The seedlings had broken through the sod and turned into a valuable and serviceable plant. The following year he was baptized into the Baptist faith. A year later he enrolled as a theological student at Douglas University in Chicago where he studied for two years. Here he married Anna Sivertsen of Norway. Having thus laid the groundwork for his future, Matteson was ordained as a Baptist minister on September 25, 1862.

In 1863, Matteson’s life again changed direction. Another encounter with Seventh-Adventists influenced him to become one, setting the direction for Matteson’s career. This was the very year the Seventh-day Adventists met in Battle Creek to draw up a

simple constitution for their general conference, as well as the year Matteson met the Age-to-Come people whose theology he rejected.

The following year his Poy Sippi Baptist Church, which consisted of the Brushville Church and the Tustin cluster as well, merged with the newly organized Seventh-day Adventist Church. Two years later, Matteson became the first minister of the Oakland Seventh-day Adventist Church, where he and his family stayed for eleven years.

During the years 1864 to 1877, Matteson brought some 1,000 new members into the Seventh-day Adventist Church, wrote hundreds of tracts and a 300-page book, and from 1872, published *Advent Tidende* for readers in both America and Scandinavia, confirming his sacred calling as a preacher, writer, and a publisher. Still he did not count himself worthy of the calling to become a missionary to Scandinavia. It may never be fully known why Matteson hesitated to accept the call. Humanly speaking, it must have been extremely hard for him and his wife to leave behind their seven children, their home of eleven years, and their many friends and parishioners. It must also have been very hard to go alone to foreign fields with limited financial support. Though in doubt, their faith went beyond all of their present circumstances. They had counseled with James White and Stephen Haskell for guidance. But in the end, it was their own realization of the need in Scandinavia that impelled them to go.

John G. Matteson: A Missionary to Scandinavia

Matteson knew from experience that the path of a Christian pioneer was never an easy one. But, so far, John G. Matteson's life had been bright with promise as he went from strength to strength, fulfilling his sacred trust as a herald of biblical truth for his time, with special emphasis on the soon return of Jesus Christ. As a teacher of

righteousness and an example of fidelity, Matteson sought with unceasing vigilance to attain to the standard he placed before his audiences. Matteson knew from years of experience that men are often ready to combat and defy Christian reasoning and logic and resist the gospel appeal as some kind of absurdity like the Greeks of old. But he was also aware that a life of disinterested love is an argument no one can gainsay.

The shortness of Matteson's stay in Denmark is somewhat hard to understand. He seemed to have been discouraged by the widespread unbelief of his fellow countrymen, their deep-seated intellectual prejudice, and their general enmity to spiritual and practical Christianity. This analysis is supported by Matteson's own comparison of the Danes to the greater religious openness of the Norwegians. The truth of the doctrines preached by Matteson seems to have been more appealing to the Norwegian mind. Thus Matteson came to view Christiania as the future center for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Scandinavia.

Matteson's unique and unparalleled success in Christiania speaks for itself. It might be maintained that if anyone was the right man at the right time there, it was he. In a relatively short time he preached to thousands, organized a church, established a publishing house, printed thousands of tracts, started publishing *Tidernes Tegn* and *Sundhedsbladet*, and bought a large real estate property.

Matteson's initial success, his popularity as a public lecturer, the newspapers' reflections on him as a gifted man of many abilities, the magnificent church building he erected, and his establishment of the printing and publishing house testified to the fact that, at least by human standards, he was a great leader, preacher, and writer. But Matteson at this time very much needed the counsel of a true friend with sound judgment,

principled character, and cautious disposition. He was more or less alone in his work until Lars Hansen came along.

Matteson's Crisis and Recovery

Matteson's choice of Hansen as his closest associate was probably fatal for both of them, because while they both exalted the law of the Lord with their lips, they failed to do so in practice. This may have been Matteson's main mistake: connecting himself with an associate who was disobedient to Scripture and to God. Sometime between February 1879 and March 1880 it became evident that Matteson was slipping spiritually.⁴ His backsliding may have been so gradual that before he was aware of it his own church was in turmoil. Almost imperceptibly, it seems, he began to trust less and less in divine guidance and blessing. At the same time he put more and more confidence in his own judgment and that of his friend Lars Hansen. Little by little they withheld from God that undivided obedience concerning Sabbath-keeping which was to mark their church as a peculiar people. Gradually they conformed more and more closely to the customs of the

⁴It is difficult to date exactly when Matteson's spiritual decline began, since its beginning was probably more or less invisible both to himself and his closest associates. Although Lars Hansen's signature is not found on SDA charter document of February 11, 1879, he is the first one to sign the sales contract of Akersgaten 74. Matteson's report concerning the purchase of Akersgaten 74 is dated February 5, 1879, or six days before the signing of the charter, hence the friendship between Hansen and Matteson must have started sometime before February 5, 1879. Hansen joined the church formally June 13/14, 1879.

As early as June 9, 1879, Ellen G. White advised Matteson by a letter concerning his work and character, but she did not become directly involved in the confrontation between Matteson and denominational administrators in the spring of 1880. Matteson's letter to Stephen Haskell of March 22, 1880, in which Matteson expressed his desire to resign and to be replaced by someone else, reveals clearly his uncontrolled, destructive, and fiery traits of character. The same defects are revealed in his correspondence with James White, W. C. White, and Ellen G. White that same year.

world. Matteson's remarkable success and his honored position seem to have taken his eyes off of God as the source of his prosperity.

As Matteson's work grew in size, some were so impressed by his preaching and success that they viewed him as almost equal to Christ himself. As he lost the spirit of serving God in humility and love, his home and his church also declined in influence. He became harsh and judgmental, exercising on many occasions supreme authority both in his home and church. Naturally headstrong and self-willed, this attitude was reflected in his treatment of his wife and children, and his distrust in and dissatisfaction with his coworkers, with the exception of Lars Hansen.

These years of Matteson's personal backsliding led the church in Christiania to decline as well. The members' love for God and their sense of his high and holy character was greatly lessened. At the height of the rebellion, which seems to have included the majority of the members, attitudes were so negative that some of their neighbors thought these new dissenters were not Christians. Hence the church suffered a steady spiritual decline under his and Hansen's leadership.

Although Matteson based his preaching and writing on Scripture, it appears that he had in reality become satisfied with intellectual conformity as constituting the sufficient elements of the Christian faith. His preaching at this time may be compared with the "dead orthodoxy" of the 1600s when the inward spiritual life received less emphasis, and the general focus was external and dogmatic. Faith consisted in the acceptance of prophetic and dogmatic understanding, but a living and vital relationship between the believer and God was not understood by the majority of the members in Christiania. The sum of their Christian life was to accept intellectually the doctrines

Matteson preached. Such conditions affected the lay members in such a way that their role was largely passive.

When Matteson once asked Ellen G. White to speak less of Christian duty and more of the love of Christ he was essentially rejecting the fruit of the gospel, and thus rejecting the gospel itself. He also challenged her strong emphasis on the law and the Sabbath. Her response was that she had not come to Norway to “round the corners,” that is, to preach smooth sermons that avoided offending anyone.⁵

The Influence of Ellen G. White’s Visits to Norway

In Ellen G. White’s diary, from which the previous quote is taken, she also said to Matteson that she would “speak as the Spirit of the Lord shall impress me.” She continued: “My work is to elevate the standard of piety and true Christian life, and urge the people to put away sins and be sanctified through the truth.” She tried thus to impress the church in Christiania “with the necessity of strictly observing the Sabbath according to the commandment.”⁶

Ellen G. White had come to stop the misguided course of Matteson that had been accumulating for five or six years and to redeem, if possible, his past and present mistakes in order to restore confidence in his ability to lead the work with foresight and mature judgment. She had also come to take firm steps in checking the growth of apostasy in the church before it would be too late. White, therefore, immediately set about repairing the evil that had been wrought. She did so by addressing very successfully the general public in Christiania during her first week in 1885. By so doing,

⁵MS 26, 1885.

⁶Ibid.

she not only got excellent reviews in the press, but made it possible for the church members to get to know her as a person, an acclaimed lecturer, and a God-fearing mother, before she had to deliver her sternest sermons on the malignant spirit which rendered evil for evil, both publicly and privately, and to help the members at the same time to become earnest and active Christians.

White's visits were a singular success. Not only did she stop the disturbing noise from the blacksmith's workshop and the marble shop, the evil speaking and gossiping, fanaticism regarding pictures, and disrespect for the sanctity of the Sabbath, but her influence had brought about a sanctification of the whole being of most of the members. This is indicated by the Christian atmosphere when the church met at the Moss camp meeting.

Although contemporary sources are relatively few, apart from Ellen G. White's own writings, her influence in Norway may be estimated by using the camp meeting at Moss as an indicator of the impact of her earlier visits to Christiania. The spirituality at the camp meeting and Council sessions seems to suggest movement-wide repentance and revival of practical godliness due to White's previous deep spiritual appeals.

Church members came from many directions to hear Ellen G. White at the Moss camp meeting. Quite a number must have come from Christiania, since that church was by far the largest Adventist congregation in Norway. Such positive Christian fellowship presupposes penitence and confession of sins. It shows that the members had not only received White's message of stern and severe reproof mingled with glad Christian tidings, but decided to act upon it. This brought great relief and joy to Ellen G. White. She was also satisfied with what she experienced during the Council sessions.

Some of Ellen G. White's unbending disapproval and admonition had been directed to John G. Matteson during her stay in Norway in 1885 and 1886. She had counseled him before she arrived in Norway by pointing out where there was room for improvement in his work and in his personal life. White's dissatisfaction with Matteson in March and April 1886 made him feel deeply hurt and it took special effort on her part to heal these wounds. In the end her soothing and comforting words led him to repentance and remission of sins. He therefore took action concerning Sabbath-keeping, the spirit of criticism, and the incorrigible members. He also followed up White's advice concerning the education of helpers in Christiania, Stockholm, and Copenhagen. At Moss, Matteson was a changed man. After his death in 1896 at the age of sixty-one, White wrote that Matteson "now sleeps in Jesus, united with his Saviour as his helping hand."⁷

Although little has been written about the influence of Ellen G. White during the years shortly after her visits to Norway, a birthday greeting that a small group of Adventists in Voss, Norway, sent to her for her eighty-fifth birthday in 1912 may sum up the high regard many had for her. "We thank the Lord for all the light He has given through the Spirit of Prophecy, and pray for help to walk in it." They also prayed that the Lord might protect and strengthen his aged servant "whom He has chosen to bring us all this wonderful light and guidance."⁸

⁷MS 26, 1901.

⁸Quoted in Delafield, 319.

General Conclusions

The first and perhaps most basic conclusion of this study is that Norwegian Seventh-day Adventism began as an extension and further development of Norwegian Pietism, as promoted by Hans Nielsen Hauge, who in turn was greatly influenced by continental Pietism.

Hauge came to feel that he had a divine call (April 5, 1796) which made it mandatory for him to preach the Bible, and the Bible alone, about the fruit of justification by faith. He felt that people had to be awakened to a consciousness of their sins before they could begin to claim salvation by the grace of God, thus making Christian living a personal obligation. Although Hauge's theology was completely within the bounds of Lutheran doctrine, he felt that the Lutheran Church of his day did not emphasize the type of spirituality that Martin Luther had championed, and which Pietism had later revived. Hauge thought, therefore, that the established church, because of its religious formalism and lethargy, had failed to provide parishioners with a personal spiritual experience. He also defied the secular establishment which prohibited any religious meetings not authorized by the State Church, according to the Conventicle Act of 1741, for which he was imprisoned more or less from 1804 to 1811.⁹ By his preaching and example Hauge gave voice to ordinary people, and thus prepared the soil from which Norwegian Adventism would grow.

Hauge died in 1824. Emigration to America began in 1825. Most of the emigrants came from Southern Norway. Hauge's preaching did influence many

⁹Hauge's final release from prison came December 23, 1814, the year of Norway's independence. After his death, his relatives fought to get rid of the Conventicle Law, and in 1842 it was repealed after prevailing for 101 years.

emigrants who longed for a land of freedom of conscience, including four of the farming families from Southern Norway presented in this dissertation. Although those farmers never explicitly called themselves Haugians, they did credit their spiritual awakening to “lay preachers, some of whom were very earnest and devoted, and quite familiar with the Bible,”¹⁰ which is a conclusive reference to Haugian lay preachers. Here in Southern Norway the four families discovered the Sabbath before they had contacts with Seventh-day Adventists or even knew of their existence. Here, therefore, are the little-known roots of Norwegian Adventism. Here, in Southern Norway was laid the cornerstone of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway.

The conclusion that Adventism represented an essentially Pietist movement is supported by the content of Ellen G. White’s preaching and her approach to the church in Christiania. When she visited the Christiania church in 1885 and 1886, she realized immediately the almost total lack of individual piety and of vigorous Christian practical life. She felt, just as Hauge had in his day, that before the church members could begin to claim salvation by the grace of God, they had to be awakened to a consciousness of their sins. She maintained that in spite of Matteson’s emphasis on the intellectual and doctrinal understanding of the Christian faith, he had failed to lead the members of his church into a personal spiritual experience, precisely because he himself had not found, or at least had not retained, that deeper spiritual experience.

Although Matteson had restored to the Bible its place in the pulpit, through neglect of personal piety, his preaching had degenerated into a dogmatic legalism which fostered self-righteousness. Mrs. White therefore called for the fruit of the Holy Spirit as

¹⁰McReynolds, 16.

the indispensable sign of a true knowledge of Christianity. Thus, without compromising her biblical beliefs, she personally met a spiritual crisis in a redemptive way

This, too, was characteristic of Pietism, which insisted that theology must not only be believed, but practiced in the life. The Christiania church members believed the Sabbath, but were not observing it carefully or spiritually. They believed in loving their neighbor, but were tearing each other apart with judging and gossiping. So Ellen G. White in significant ways took a Pietist approach to solving that crisis in the Christiania SDA Church, calling them to actually practice what they already believed in theory.

A further conclusion is that a detailed analysis of Matteson's career in Christiania and the spiritual discipline given him by Ellen G. White, illuminates aspects of Matteson's life that were not previously known or properly understood. Matteson had stumbled, but he accepted the testimony of Ellen G. White and became a changed man. The same was true of the Christiania SDA Church. White's pointed testimony took the church in an altogether different direction—of which the camp meeting at Moss in 1887 was evidence. Once more the Bible became an affair of the heart and of life and not merely of the intellect. The “desired piety” had seen its day once more.¹¹

¹¹The expression “desired piety” is borrowed from the book *Pia Desideria* (The desired piety), by P. J. Spener, who has been called the father of Pietism.

APPENDIX A

MAPS OF NORWAY AND VICINITY

APPENDIX A

MAPS OF NORWAY AND VICINITY

The first map on page 396 shows the interactive area of the Celts and the Norwegians. Christianity came first to Western Norway at an unknown date. Christianity came also to the Celtic tribes at a unknown date, but not later than ca. 200. The Celts were enthusiastic missionaries who may have brought Christianity to Western Norway. The Celtic priests were called *papar* by the Norwegian Vikings. The map shows but a few of the many locations carrying the name *papar*. In Iceland there is *Papey* (Island of Papar); in the Shetland Islands *Papa Stour* or in old Norse *Papey Stóra* (Large island of Papar). The island *Papa Westray* (Western island of Papar) in the Orkney Islands is affectionately known by the local people simply as *Papay*, spelled in old Norse *Papey*, or in English translation the Island of Papar. The Orkney *Papar* were accused of being *iudaismo adherentes* (adherents of the Jewish faith) as late as circa 1160/1175.

The second map on page 397 shows Vest-Agder County in South Norway, including the location of the Finsland Church in Songdalen municipality and the city of Kristiansand South.

The third map on page 398 shows Songdalen municipality with the farms of some of the emigrants. The names of the farms originally supplied the family names of the emigrants presented in chapter 1, before they changed their names after arriving in the USA.

Page 399 brings to view the farms in Vågsbygd connected to the emigrants. Today Vågsbygd is the largest section of Kristiansand South.

Page 400 contains a picture of Finsland Church built in 1803 and some of the farms of the emigrants as they look today.

Page 401 shows the city of Kristiansand South and its harbor as it appeared in 1846/48, just before the departure of the emigrants. Some of them probably left from this harbor for the USA, and others may have left from Stavanger. This is discussed in chapter one.



Norway

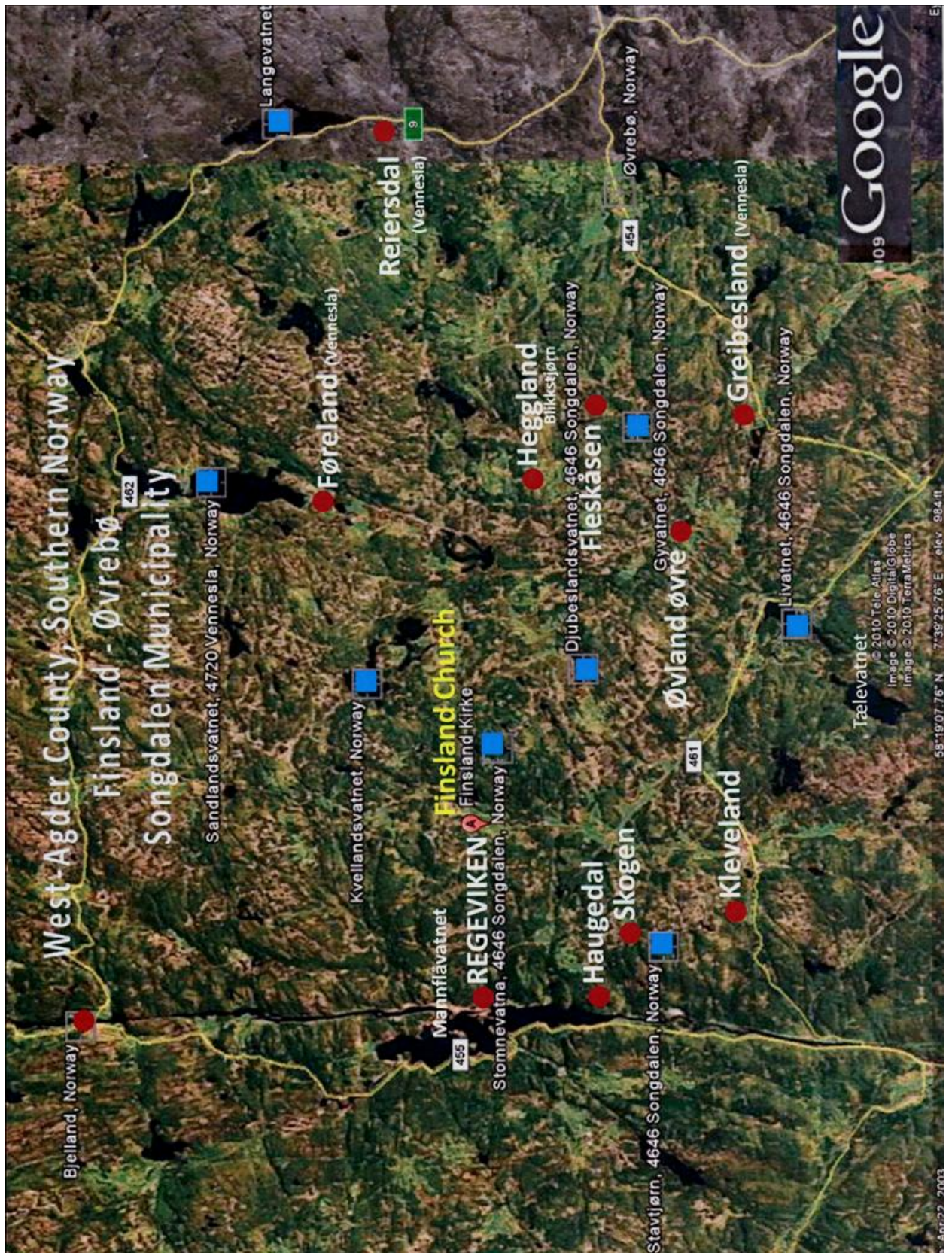


- Municipality of
- 1 Marnardalen
 - 2 Vennesla
 - 3 Songdalen
 - 4 Søgne
 - 5 Kristiansand

West-Agder County



Wikipedia







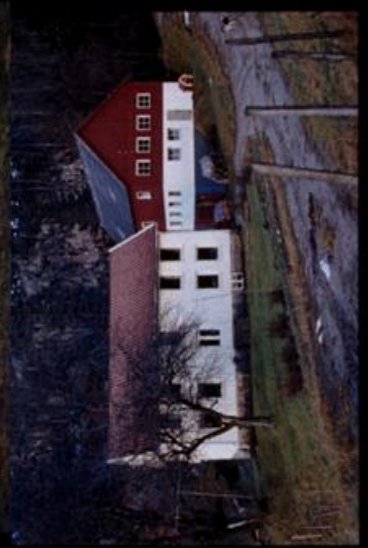
Øvland øvre



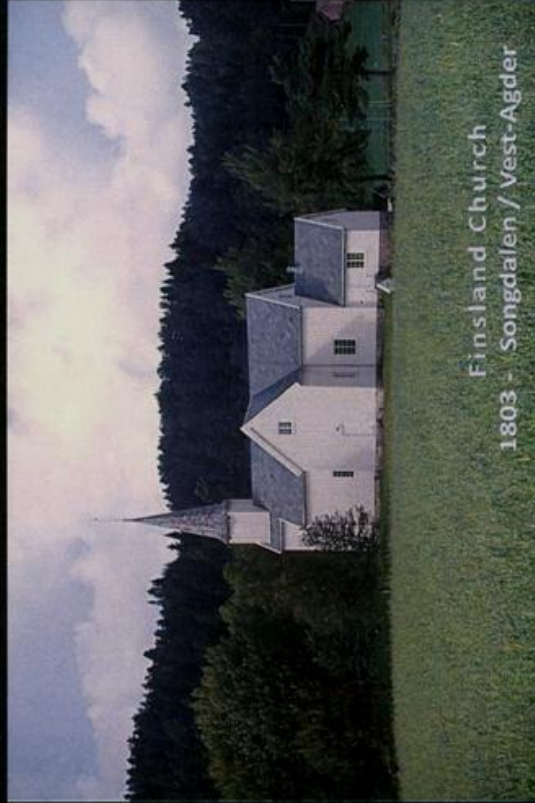
Fleskåsen



Regeviken



Haugedal



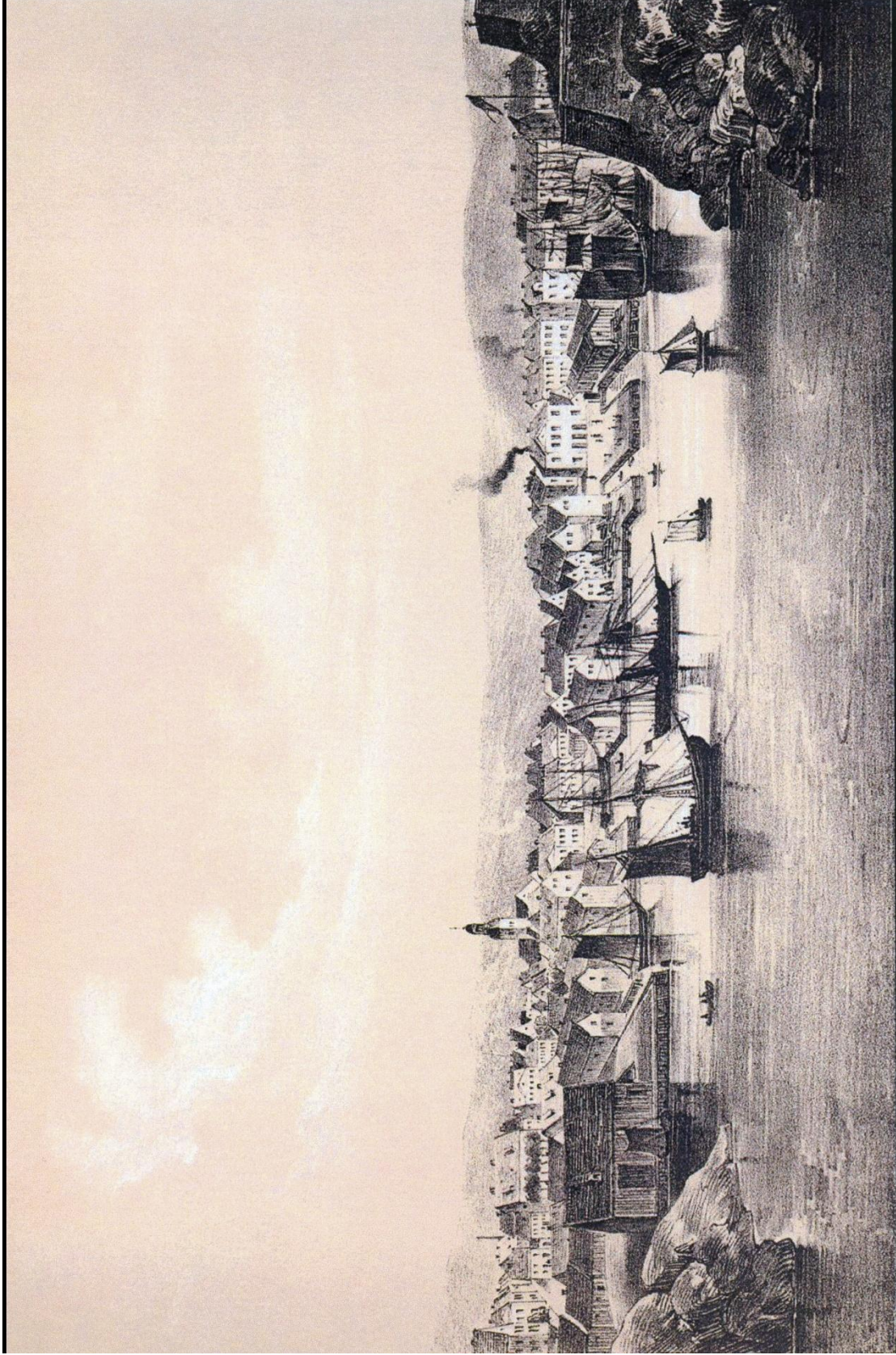
Finsland Church
1803 - Songdalen / Vest-Agder



Heggland



Skogen



Kristiansand South 1846/1848

Nils Christian Tønberg, Norge fremstillet i Tegninger

APPENDIX B

MAPS OF SITES IN AND NEAR OAKLAND, WISCONSIN, USA

APPENDIX B

MAPS OF SITES IN OR NEAR OAKLAND, WISCONSIN, USA

The first map on page 405 shows the State of Wisconsin, with Oakland and Sumner Townships. Advent Road in Oakland Township was named in honor of the Seventh-day Adventists who settled in Jefferson County, Wisconsin. Lake Koshkonong is shown. Its vicinity was named Koskeland by the Norwegian immigrants.

The second map on page 406 shows the Oakland and Sumner Townships in Jefferson County, Wisconsin. At upper left is the town of Cambridge where the Norwegians attended the Methodist church, and at left center is the Advent Road.

The third map on page 407 is an aerial view showing the exact locations of the Seventh-day Adventist church and of the farms of the Norwegian settlers, according to Milo Larson who still lives on the farm once belonging to Andrew Olsen.

The fourth map on page 408 shows the exact location of Andrew Olsen's farm which today belongs to Milo Larson.

Page 409 shows Milo Larson's Green Valley Farm, which once belonged to Andrew Olsen. Inserted pictures are of Andrew Olsen and his wife Berthe, and the current owner, Milo Larson (below right) with Erling B. Snorrason (below left).

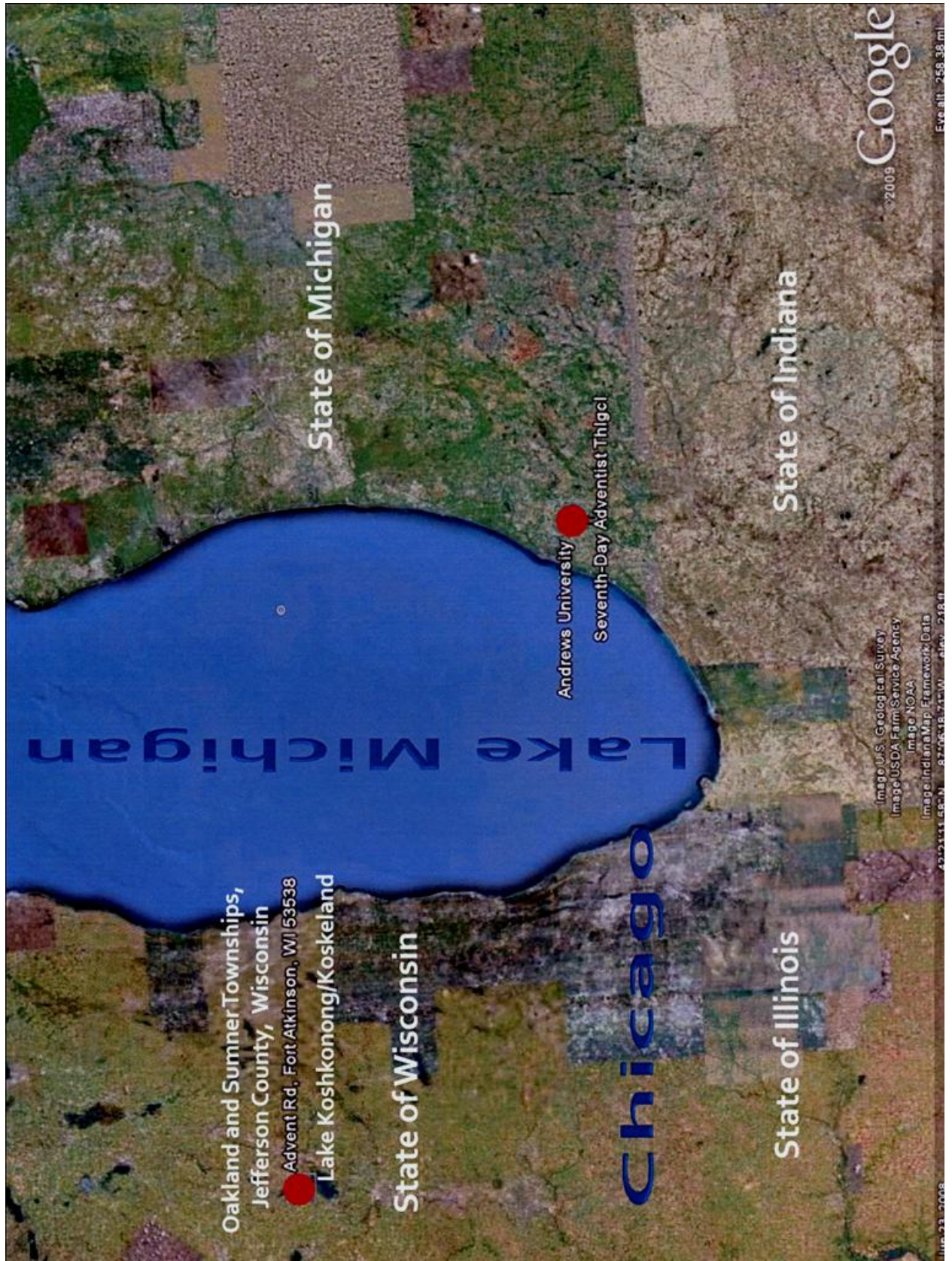
Page 410 shows Matteson's home, with inserted pictures of John G. Matteson and his wife Anna.

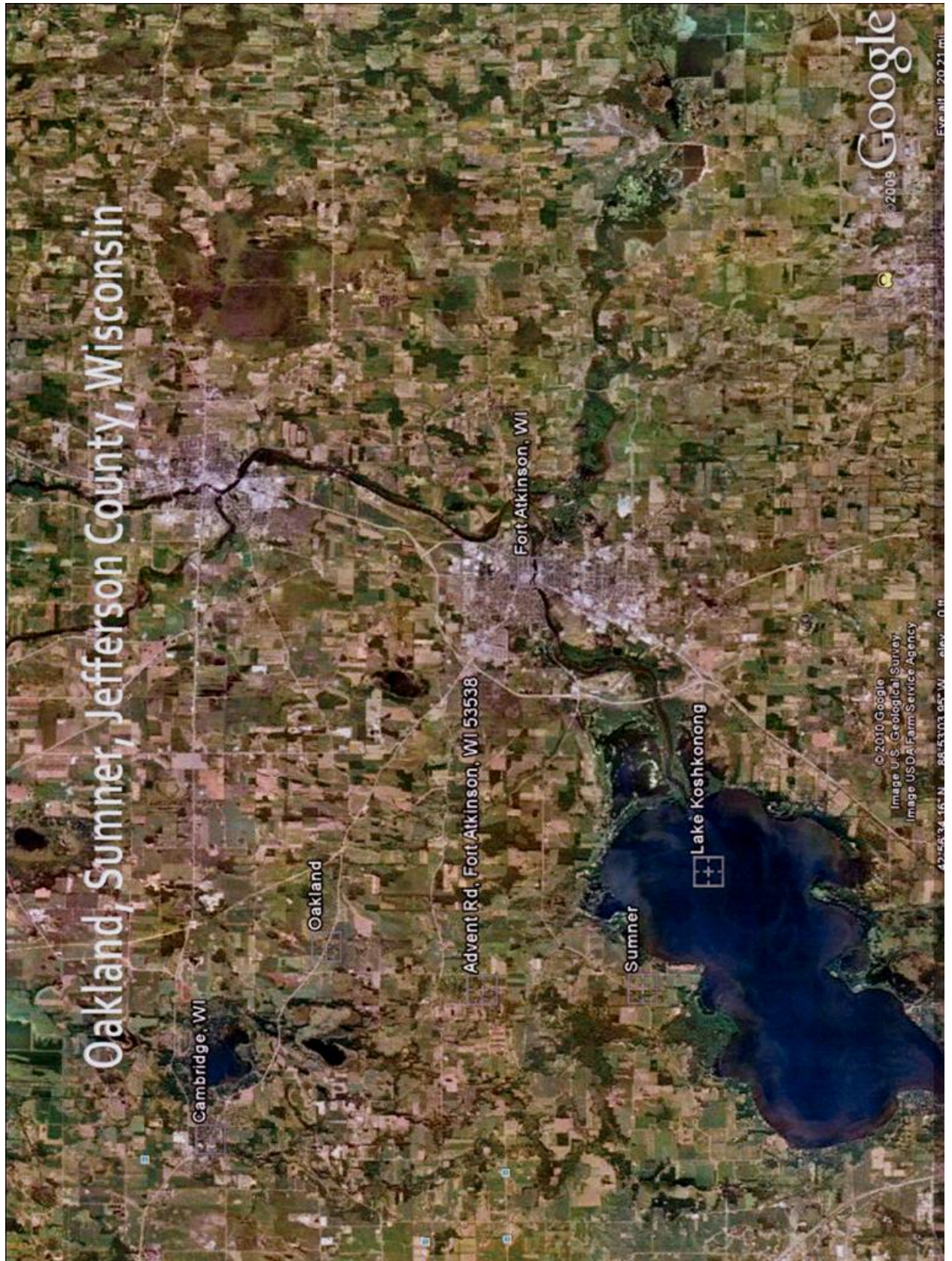
Page 411 shows the Oakland, Wisconsin, Seventh-day Adventist church with my brother Dr. Erling B. Snorrason in front of it.

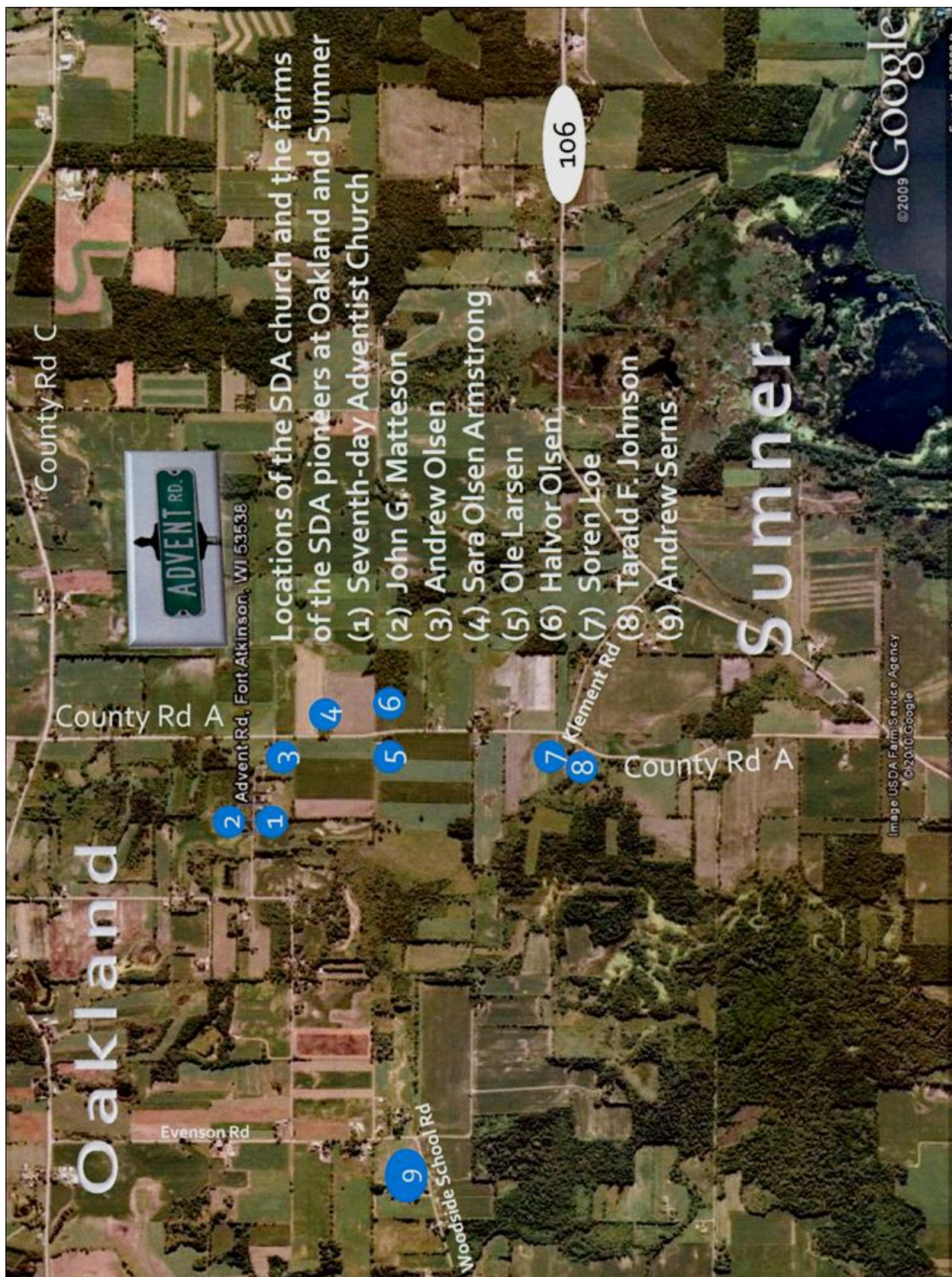
Page 412 shows Ole Serns who died of an accident at the age of fifty-one.

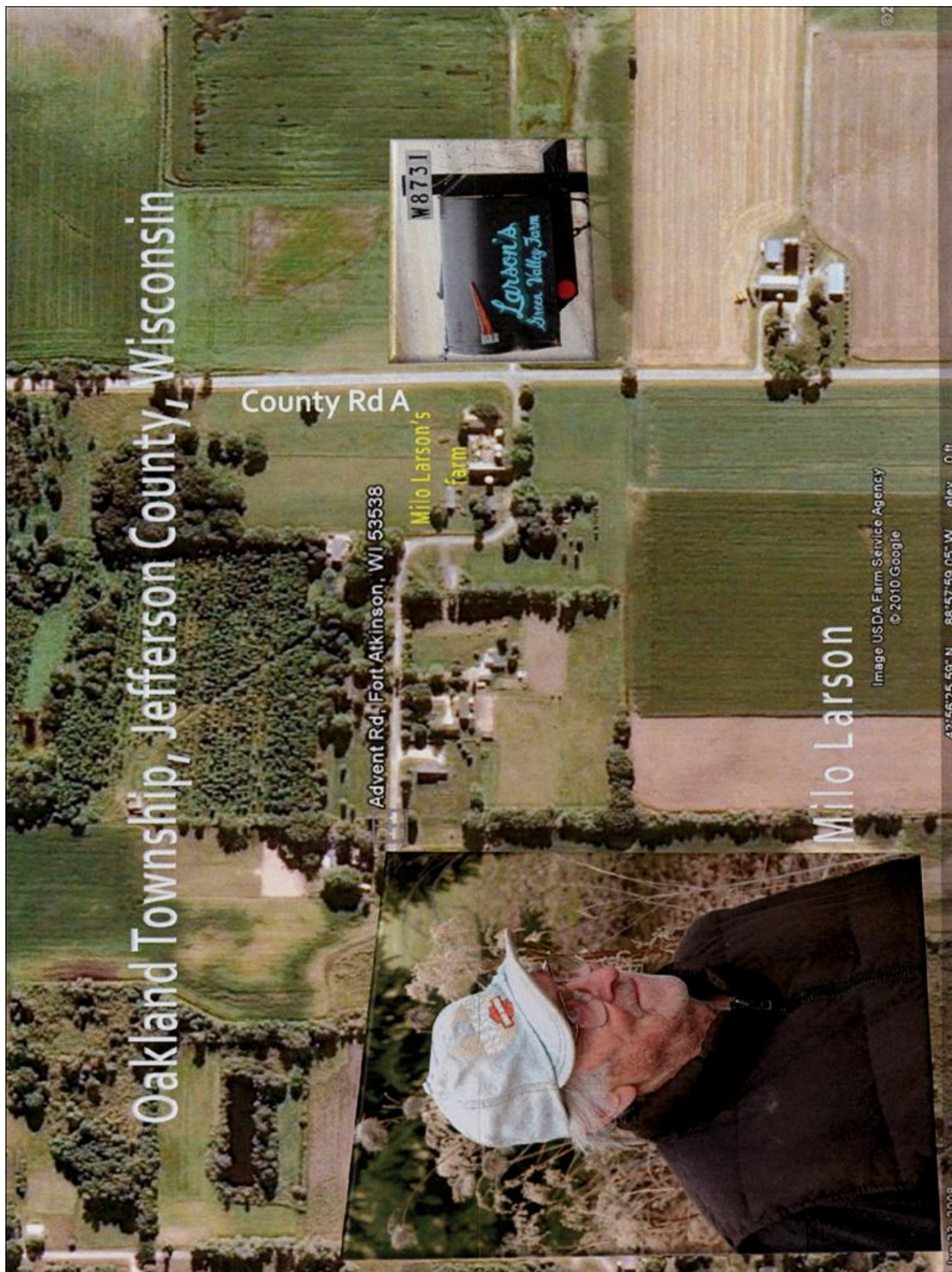
Page 413 shows some of the tombstones in the graveyard of the Oakland, Wisconsin, Seventh-day Adventist church.

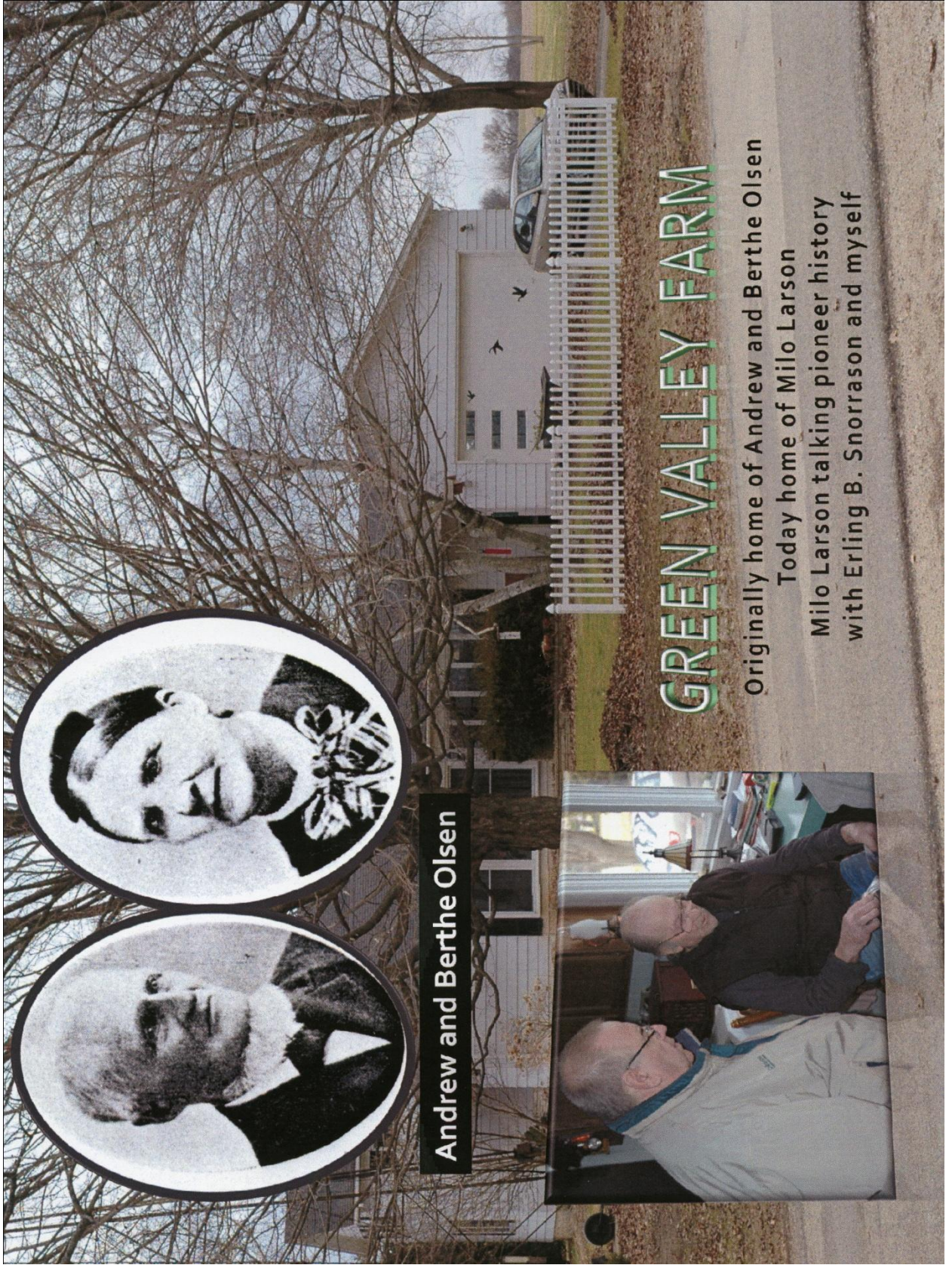
Page 414 pictures the oldest Scandinavian Methodist church in the world at Cambridge, Wisconsin. In its graveyard stands the tombstone of Soren and Bertha Loe.









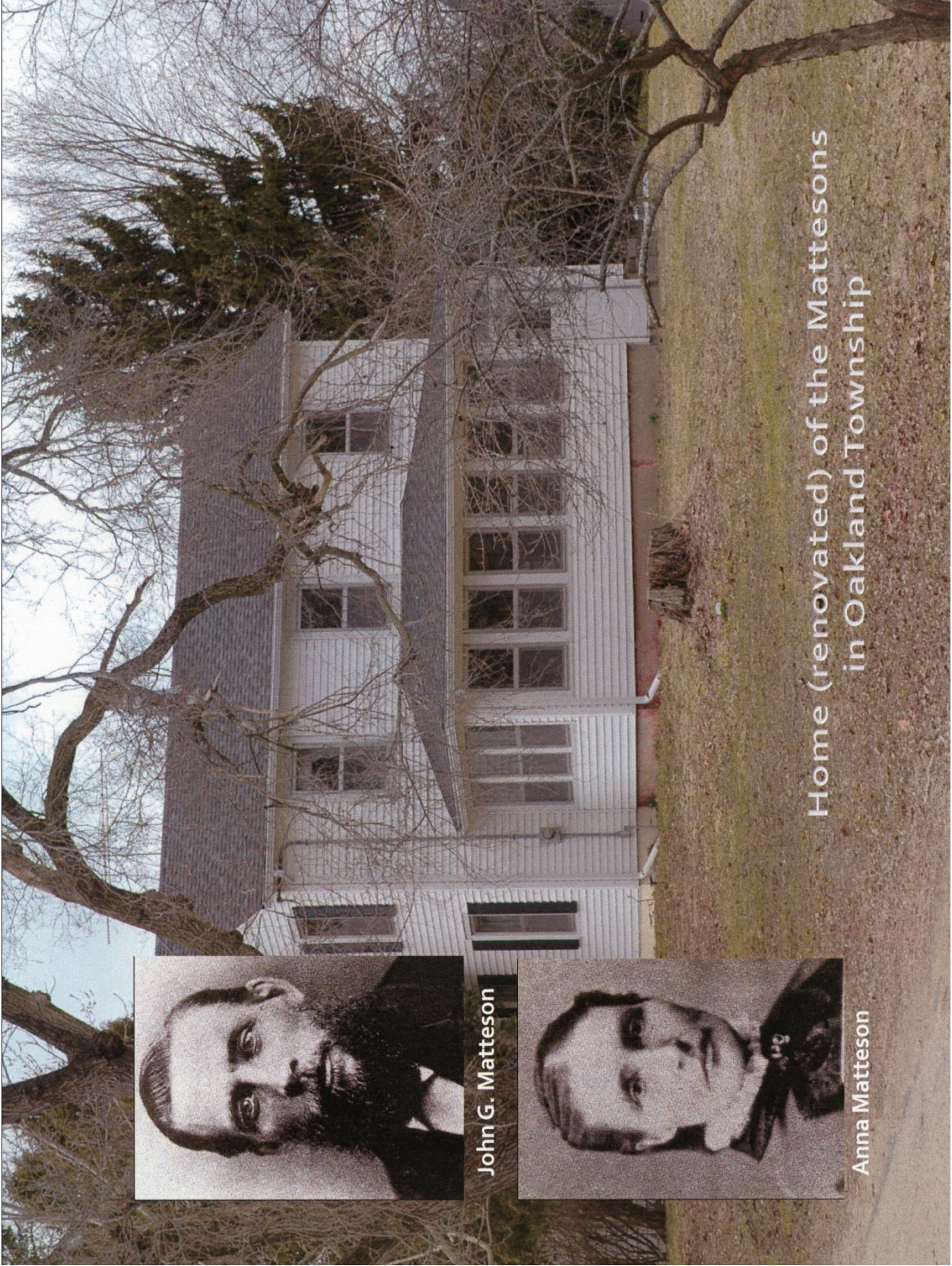


Andrew and Berthe Olsen



GREEN VALLEY FARM

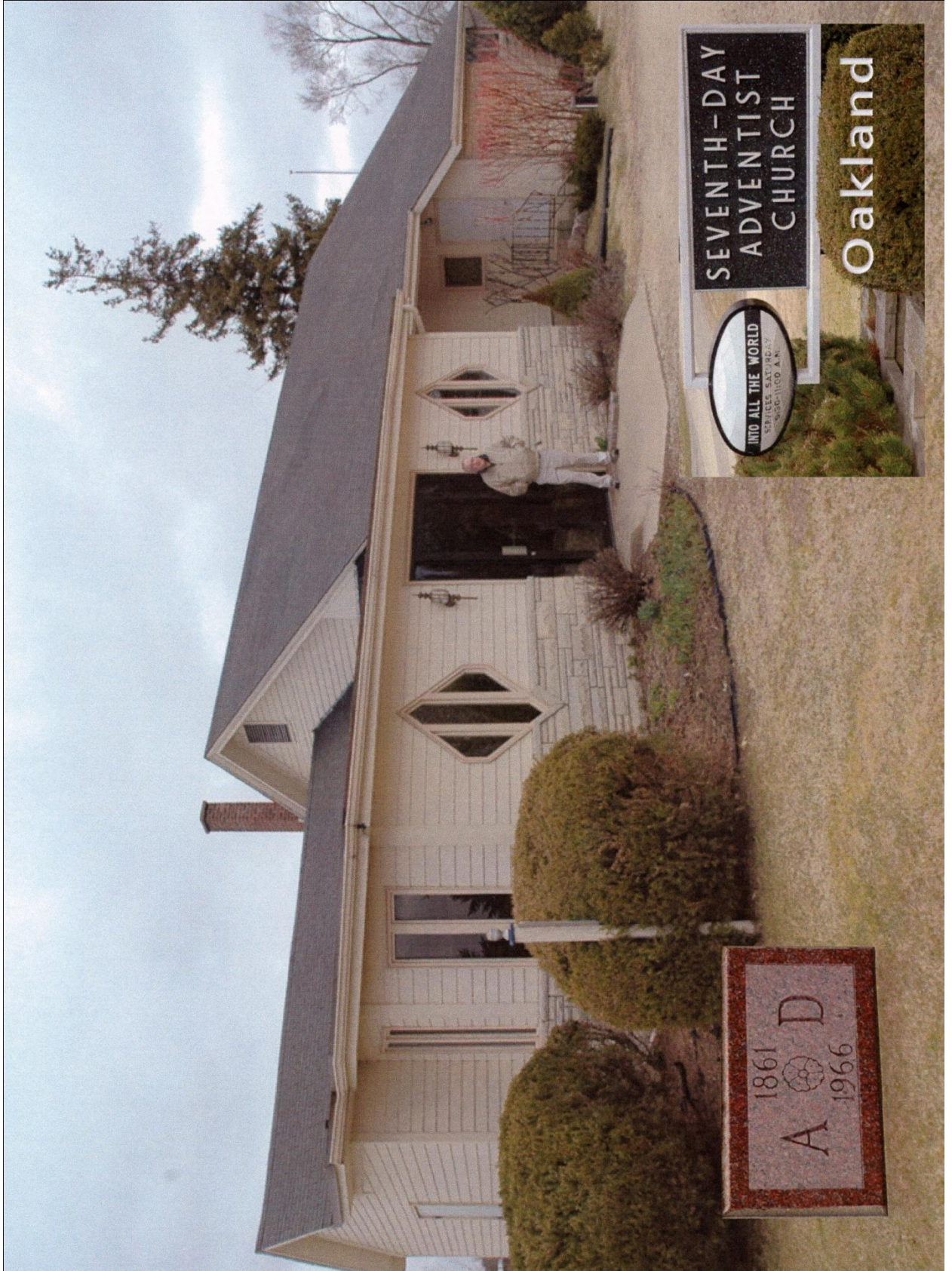
Originally home of Andrew and Berthe Olsen
Today home of Milo Larson
Milo Larson talking pioneer history
with Erling B. Snorrason and myself

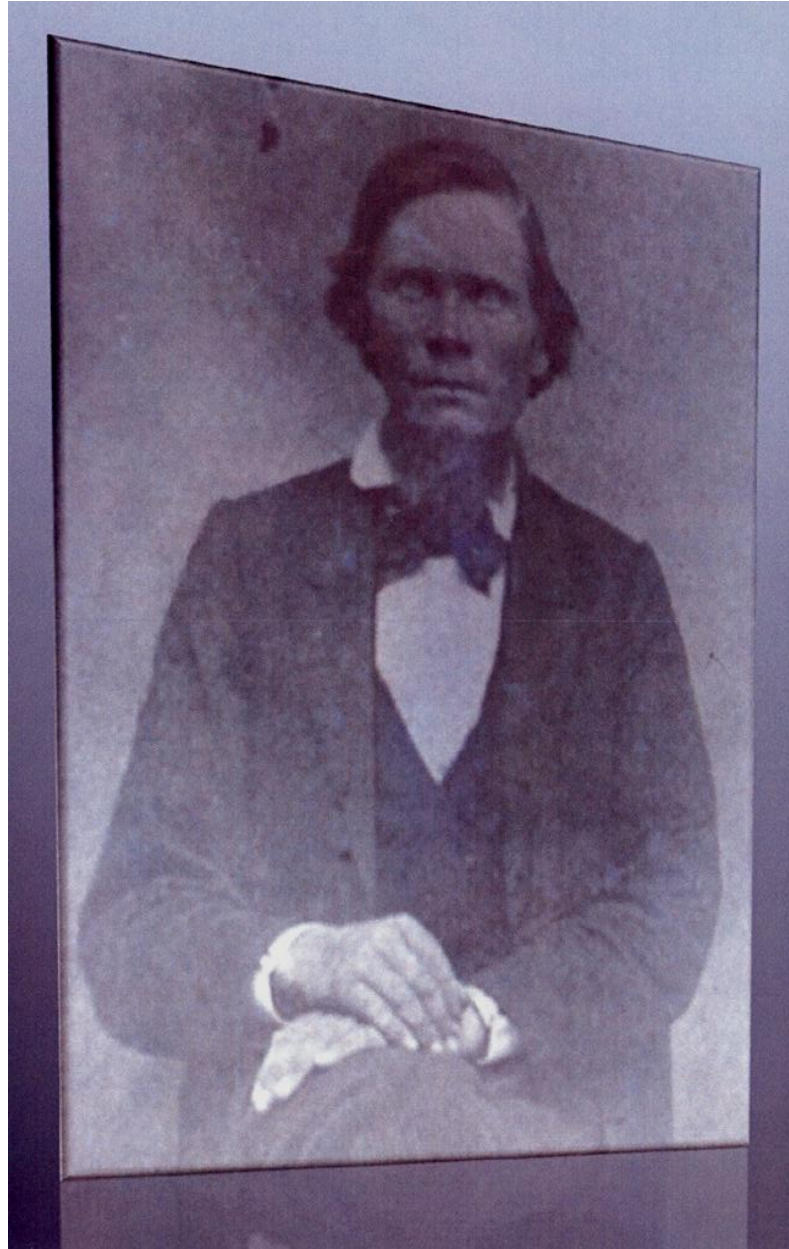


John G. Matteson



Anna Matteson





Ole Sørensen Fleskåsen (Føreland) Heggland. His family name in the USA became Serns. His wife was Ingjer Ånensdotter Reirsdal. He was baptized in Øvrebø Church May 18, 1806 (date of birth unknown). He emigrated to Oakland, Wisconsin in 1850. He had an accident in the woods, perhaps struck by a falling stone, and died eighteen days later on June 14, 1857. He was buried in the graveyard of the Scandinavian Methodist Church in Cambridge, Wisconsin. His oldest son Ånen did not go with him to the USA, because his true love Silje Bertine Bentsdotter Kleveland did not want to emigrate. She was born in 1835 and hence 15 years of age when Ole Sørensen left Norway. She coined the saying: “Dei reiste for truå” or “They left because of their faith.” See Kristen Lauvland, *Finsland–Ætt og gård* (Finsland, lineage and farm), 40.



1



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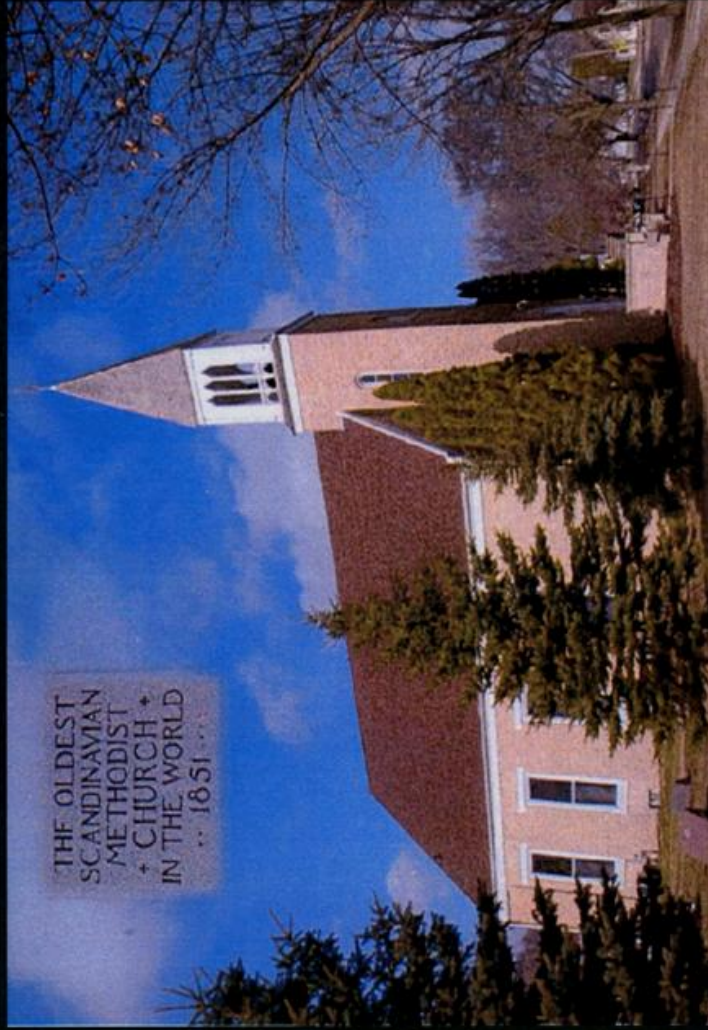
5



6

Tombstones of some of the Norwegian pioneers in the cemetery of the SDA Church, Oakland, Wisconsin:

- (1) Andrew and Berthe Olsen
- (2) Halvor Olsen
- (3) Aase (Assa) Olsen
- (4) Tarel F. and Tone Johnson
- (5) Andrew and Marie Serns
- (6) Susanne Olsen



Willerup United Methodist Church, Cambridge, Wisconsin.

Inserted inscription found beside the entrance door to the church.



Tombstone of Loe and his wife in the churchyard of Willerup United Methodist Church, Cambridge

APPENDIX C

CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF MATTESON'S LIFE

APPENDIX C

CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF MATTESON'S LIFE

| | |
|---------|--|
| 1835 | Baptized May 1, about 8 days after his birth (April 23?) in the village of Tranekær on the Danish Langeland Island. |
| 1839 | Began school at the age of four. |
| 1847 | Received violin instruction at the age of 12 |
| 1848 | Commenced high school at the age of 13. |
| 1849 | Received catechism instruction at the age of 14. |
| 1850/51 | Confirmed at Easter. Worked in a general store for two and a half years. |
| 1852 | Stayed at home and studied tailoring for over a year. |
| 1853 | Began to work as a postal clerk at the age of 18. |
| 1855 | Immigrated to the United States of America at the age of 20 and settled in New Denmark, Brown County, Wisconsin. |
| 1858 | During the winter Matteson read the book <i>Ironthorpe: the Pioneer Preacher</i> and asked himself the question: "Why cannot you become a Christian?" Became a Christian. |
| 1859 | Matteson baptized into the Baptist Christian faith, but was denied ordination as a Baptist minister because of his belief in foot-washing before receiving the Lord's Supper. |
| 1860 | At 25, student at Douglas University, Chicago, for two years. |
| 1862 | Married Anna Sivertsen of Tromsø, Norway. To their marriage were born 7 children: Matilda, Christina (Tina), Samuel, Martha, Alexander, John ("little John"), and Daniel. ¹ |
| 1862 | September 25, ordained as a Baptist minister and placed in charge of the Bloomfield, Brushville, and Waushara Baptist churches. Received teaching certificate. |

¹GV, 6.

- 1863 Rejected the theology of Age-to-Come. Impressed with the Seventh-day Adventists at Mackford, Wisconsin. Published a handwritten paper of 24 pages. In late August/early September, became a Sabbath-keeper.
- 1864 Early this year the Poy Sippi church was organized. Matteson called it the “first fruits” of his labor as a Sabbath-keeper. Then the Brushville church, the Poy Sippi church, and the Tustin cluster were united into the Poy Sippi Church. Later the same year the Poy Sippi Church joined the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, and Matteson received a license to preach for the Adventists.
- 1865 In July, moved from Poy Sippi to Mackford, Wisconsin. In November, moved to Oakland, Wisconsin, beginning 11 years residence there.
- 1866 In May, went to Battle Creek, Michigan, with a manuscript in Danish on the Sabbath. His little tract *Sabbats Dagen* (The Sabbath day) paved the way for scores of later Danish/Norwegian and Swedish publications.
- 1867 Wrote and published a 300-page-book titled *Liv og Død* (Life and death). Ordained as a minister of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, September 21.
- 1872 *Advent Tidende* published for the first time.
- 1877 Left for Denmark and Norway as the second official missionary of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
- Arrived June 6 in Denmark, 22 years after he had left it for USA. Printed a hymnbook containing 70 psalms.
- 1878 Organized in April/May 1878 the first Seventh-day Adventist church in Denmark, the Alstrup church in Vendsyssel. This was the first SDA church in Northern Europe. After a year of fruitful work in Denmark he decided to leave for Norway.
- Arrived in Christiania, Norway, October 15. Commenced full-scale evangelism in the city soon after arrival, making Christiania his headquarters.

- 1879 Launched early in January *Tidernes Tegn* (“Signs of the Times”) and the second SDA publishing house to be established outside North America.
- January 11 he organized the first SDA Church in Christiania, Norway.
- Bought Eugenia-Institution Estate, Akersvejen no. 2, with an assembly hall seating up to a thousand people. There was also room for a publishing house and apartments for rent.
- Outreach in Drammen, Eidsvold, and Skien, besides his multiple responsibilities in Christiania.
- 1880 Organized the first conference outside of North America in Denmark, and was elected first president of that conference.
- Outreach in Tvedestrand, besides his work in Christiania.
- 1881 The health periodical *Sundhedsbladet* in Danish-Norwegian published for the first time from July 1. He also brought out a songbook, including a number of songs, both words and music, of his own composition.
- Outreach in Valø and Arendal, besides his work in Christiania.
- 1882 Organized July 27 the publishing house in Christiania under the name *Den Skandinaviske Forlags-og Trykkeri-forening* (The Scandinavian publishing and printing association). Books and periodicals were printed for Sweden and Denmark, as well as for Norway. By this time Matteson had written 30 different pamphlets and tracts for his Scandinavian audience.
- Outreach in Moss, besides his work in Christiania.
- 1883 Opening of the first church school in Denmark in Dronninglund, in Brønderslev municipality, Northern Jutland.
- 1885 Drammen SDA Church organized with 14 members.
- Ellen G. White’s first visit to Norway.
- 1886 Larvik SDA Church organized with 13 members.
- Ellen G. White’s second visit to Norway.

Dedicated March 14 the first Seventh-day Adventist church building in Christiania, Norway, where the Eugenia Institution Estate had stood. Seating capacity 400 people. New printing room on the level below the assembly hall.

- 1887 March 19, Moss SDA Church organized with 15 members.
- Ellen G. White's third and final visit to Norway.
- June 8 to 21, Moss camp meeting.
- 10 June, Norwegian SDA Conference organized with O. A. Olsen as president.
- 1888 Returned to America.
- 1893 Began three years as Bible teacher and editor at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.²
- 1896 John G. Matteson died at the age of 61.

²*SDAE*, s.v. Matteson, John Gottlieb.

APPENDIX D

ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS OF THE CHRISTIANIA, NORWAY, SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

APPENDIX D

ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS OF THE CHRISTIANIA, NORWAY, SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Pages 422-24 show the two original documents, signed by the charter members, requesting legal recognition for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Christiania, Norway, January 11, 1879. For English translation, see chapter 4, pages 239-41.

Pages 425-28 show the document regarding the second organization of the church on June 7, 1879, according to the standards of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The names of the charter members are shown as well. They differ from the first document of January 11.

Page 425 shows the cover of the record book, which reads in English: Church-book for the S. D. Adventist Church, Christiania. The title page (shown on p. 426) is translated: Church-book for the first Seventh-day Adventist Church, Christiania, Norway. The preamble and the pledge (p. 427) read in English:

Most of the sisters and brothers in the faith met June 7, 1879 at Akersveien no. 2, Christiania and signed below. Brothers and sisters made a covenant among one another: We, the undersigned brothers and sisters in the Lord adopt the name Seventh-day Adventists and make covenant among us to keep God's Commandments and Jesus' Faith.

Kristiania, Jan. 11, 1879.

Undersignede aflever hermed for
den ærede Førrighed Forsikkring om,
at jeg i min Bestilling som
Pastor for den her i Byen stiftede
Syvende Dags Adventistmenighed
vil holde mig Staters Love efter-
rettelig og være Sandhed og Pligt
tro så sandt hjælpe mig Gud
og hans hellige Ord.

John J.
Matteson,

Osterhaugaden 12. Kristiania, Norge, den 11te januar
1879.

Den ærede Førrighed underrettes herved ærbødigst om,
at vi undertegnede Beboere af Kristiania By i Dag have forenet
os til en kristelig Menighed under Navn af: "Den første
Syvende-Dags Adventist Menighed i Kristiania." Vi have
enstemmig valgt John G. Matteson til vor Pastor eller For-
stander.

Vi tro paa een sand Gud, Faderen; og paa een Hæere, Jesus
Kristus, Guds enbaarne Søn, som er død for vore Synder, opstanden
til vor Rettfordiggjærdelse, opfaren til Himmelen, tjener som en
Ypperstepræst i Helligdommen og snart skal komme igjen
for at dømmen levende og døde. Vi tro ogsaa paa den Helligaand
som Fæstemanden, Sandhedens Aand, der udgaar fra Faderen og vifter
paa Menneskene til Oprættelse, Omvendelse og Helliggjørelse.
Vi antage Bibelen som den eneste Rettesnor for vor kristelige
Tro og vort Livet, og ønske i Overensstemmelse med den
at dyrke Gud efter vor Samvittighedsoverbevisning. Vi anerkender
at de ti Bud indeholde en Hovedsum af Pligterne mod Gud og
Næsten, og at de i enhver Henseende ere uforandrede. Derfor
helligholde vi den syvende eller sidste Dag i Ugen.

Vi erkjender ogsaa, at det er vor kristelige Pligt at være Førig-
heden undordning, for saa vidt den ikke fordrer noget af os, som strider
imod Guds Ord; thi da maa vi lyde Gud mere end Mennesker.
Forsvignt forpligtede vi os^{sig} at leve i Stilhed som gode og fradelige
Borgere. — Vi holde Oplyggelse i Osterhaug. 12. og i Mantheygaten^{Gymnasiet}. —

John G. Matteson. — L. Overgaard } Ærbødigst: —
Naupe Andersen

Værkjende ogsaa, at det er vor kristelige Pligt at være Følg-
 heden underdanig, for saa vidt den ikke fordrer noget af os, som strider
 imod Guds Ord; thi da maa vi lyde Gud mere end Mennesker.
 Forsvrigt forpligtede vi os ^{til} at leve i Stilhed som gode og fradelige
 Borgere. — Vi holde Oplyggelse i Osterhaug 12 og i Mandagaa ^{Gymnasiet lokal.} } Orbedigt: —

John G. Matteson. — L. Wennerup Jens Andersen
 Anna Matteson Andreas Brorsen Hagestad Haagen
 Ole Johansen Hakon Thidofferson Peder Haakensen
 August Thorsen J. Martinson Gustav Adolph Dahlin
 Dantlud Martinson Anna Vie Maur Amundsen
 Laurine Ekeling Marie Maximie Anna Engeström
 August Erikson Caroline Johnson Cathinka Jørgensen
 O. Johansen Emma Skinnar Carl Hegerström
 Joh. Johannezen Johanne Jensen Lars Johan. Asp
 Marie Johannezen Marie Christoff Anna Lyversen
 Oluf Emil Jørgensen Gutbrand Gutbrandsen
 C. Erikson Hagen Johan Klippen

APPENDIX E

FORMATIVE AND PREPARATORY YEARS OF ELLEN G. WHITE

APPENDIX E

FORMATIVE AND PREPARATORY YEARS OF ELLEN G. WHITE

As noted at the beginning of chapter 5, Ellen G. White was to the Seventh-day Adventists a messenger from the Lord, the eschatological prophet of God.¹ In order to achieve a better understanding of her work and ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church both during her lifetime and since her death in 1915, through the continuing influence of her writings, it is important to know the basic experience of her formative years, since it is during that time that any one's future character and perspective on life is molded and shaped. To know the adult you must know the child.

Levi Stockman put it very well when, upon hearing Ellen G. White's early experience, he exclaimed, "Ellen, you are only a child. Yours is a most singular experience for one of your tender age. Jesus must be preparing you for some special work."² This appendix focuses on the early years of her formation and preparation for that challenging work.

¹Since Adventists believe that she exercised the spiritual gift of prophecy, they hold that her "writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth." However, they do not believe that she was either "verbally inspired or infallible." *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1990), 28. Jerry Moon, *W. C. White and Ellen G. White* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1993), xiii.

²*IT*, 29.

Ellen G. White's Early Life

According to Herbert E. Douglass, three “major events or circumstances” during Ellen’s youth “directly affected and focused the rest of her life.”³ These decisive experiences were: (1) her physical and mental trauma at the age of nine, (2) hearing the preaching of William Miller in 1840 and 1842, and (3) her intensely felt and thoroughgoing Christian religious experience from the age of twelve to fourteen.

First Turning Point

When Ellen G. Harmon (maiden name) was nine years of age, on her way home from school one day and crossing the town common with her twin sister Elizabeth and a schoolmate, an angry girl of thirteen followed them and threw a stone at them, which hit Ellen on the nose. For the next three weeks she was in a coma. No one but her mother expected her to live.⁴ At that time Ellen said: “I began to turn to my Saviour where I found comfort. I sought the Lord earnestly, and received consolation. I believed that Jesus did love even me.” With this assurance she bravely faced the next two years in such poor health that she “could attend school but little.”⁵ An early evidence of the love of Christ she experienced was reflected in her forgiveness toward the girl who had thrown the stone.⁶ Leaving school for good at the age of twelve due to the accident was very hard

³Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1998), 48.

⁴Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA : Pacific Press, 1948), 1:9, 10.

⁵Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2 (Battle Creek, MI : James White, 1860 ; reprint, Washington, DC : *Review and Herald*, 1945), 10, 11.

⁶*IT*, 12.

for Ellen. She said: “It was the hardest struggle of my young life to yield to my feebleness and decide that I must leave my studies and give up the hope of gaining an education.”⁷

In retrospect, almost fifty years later, she penned: “The cruel blow which blighted the joys of earth, was the means of turning my eyes to heaven. I might never have known Jesus, had not the sorrow that clouded my early years led me to seek comfort in him.”⁸

Second Turning Point

After hearing William Miller⁹ lecture for the first time at the Casco Street Church, Portland, Maine, in March 1840, Ellen was convinced that Jesus Christ would soon return. “But,” said Ellen, and there was a real *but*, because she said, “there was in my heart a feeling that I could never become worthy to be called a child of God.” Therefore, she could never be ready to meet the returning Lord. She said her “mind remained in this condition for months.”¹⁰

The following summer, Ellen, age twelve, went to Buxton, Maine, to attend a Methodist camp meeting together with her family. There she heard a sermon on how King Ahasuerus offered to Queen Esther the signal of his favor and how similarly Christ

⁷Ibid., 13.

⁸Ellen G. White, “Notes of Travel, Portland, ME,” *RH*, November 25, 1884, 737, 738.

⁹William Miller (1782–1849) was an “American farmer and Baptist preacher who announced the imminent coming of Christ and founded the movement popularly known as Millerism, or the Millerite movement, characterized by a distinctive type of premillennialism and giving rise to a group of denominations classed as the Adventist bodies.” *SDA Encyclopedia*, 1996 ed., s.v. “Miller, William.”

¹⁰*IT*, 16.

was always ready to offer his scepter of mercy to all sinners. Ellen was “much encouraged while listening” to this discourse.¹¹

Soon after the camp meeting, Ellen was taken into the Methodist on probation. A few months later, she and eleven other young people were baptized in the Atlantic Ocean on “a windy day” when “the waves ran high,” dashing upon the shore. At Ellen’s own insistence, she was baptized by immersion, since she “could not see but one mode of baptism authorized by Scriptures.” She was then received into full membership in the Methodist Church. She later recalled, “As I took this heavy cross, my peace was like a river.”¹²

At the age of fourteen (June 1842), Ellen again “felt it a great privilege” to hear the preaching of William Miller in Portland, Maine, but again she was discouraged because she no longer had the “happy confidence in my Saviour's love” that she had experienced during her illness, and she “did not feel prepared to meet” the Lord.¹³

The main reason for Ellen’s deeply felt discouragement was that she was confused by what her Methodist church then taught about justification and sanctification. They seemed to believe that the conclusive evidence for holiness of heart was spiritual ecstasy electrifying the whole being. Ellen said: “I did not experience the spiritual ecstasy that I considered would be the evidence of my acceptance with God, and I dared

¹¹*IT*, 16.

¹²*Ibid.*, 14, 16, 19, 20.

¹³*Ibid.*, 13.

not believe myself converted without it.” Therefore, she could not feel “entirely accepted of God.”¹⁴

Methodists at this time also spoke graphically about the horrors of eternally burning hell. Because of that, Ellen began gradually to look upon God as an evil “tyrant.” Ellen was a sensitive girl who “dreaded giving pain to any living creature,” and when the thought took possession of my mind that God delighted in the torture of His creatures, who were formed in His image, a wall of darkness seemed to separate me from Him.” Her “heart sank with fear” and she “despaired that so cruel and tyrannical a being would ever condescend to save” her from the doom of sin. She “seemed already to feel the pains of perdition.” Overwhelmed by despair, she said: “Total darkness settled upon me, and there seemed no way out of the shadows.” “Many times the wish arose that I had never been born.”¹⁵

Although Ellen felt she could claim what the Methodists called justification, she thought she could not claim holiness, and without holiness she knew she could not be ready for the soon coming of Christ. She “studied over the subject continually,” words of “condemnation” rang in her ears “day and night,” and her “constant cry to God was, What shall I do to be saved?”¹⁶

Third Turning Point

“While in this state of despondency,” Ellen “had a dream that made a deep impression” on her. She dreamed she saw a temple and that “only those who took refuge

¹⁴*IT*, 22.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 23-25.

in that temple would be saved.” She also “saw that the vast temple was supported by one immense pillar, and to this was tied a lamb all mangled and bleeding” on the sinner’s account. She also understood that all who wanted to enter the temple must come before the lamb “and confess their sins.” Ellen then saw a very happy company of people “who had come before the lamb, confessed their sins, received pardon” and were waiting for “some joyful event.” As Ellen was slowly making her “way around the pillar in order to face the lamb” to confess her sins, the joyful event took place and then disappeared in a moment and Ellen felt that she had been “left alone in the silent horror of night.” She said: “I awoke in agony of mind and could hardly convince myself that I had been dreaming. It seemed to me that my doom was fixed, that the Spirit of the Lord had left me, never to return.”¹⁷

Soon after this Ellen had another dream. She said: “I seemed to be sitting in abject despair with my face in my hands, reflecting like this: If Jesus were upon earth, I would go to Him, throw myself at His feet, and tell Him all my sufferings. He would not turn away from me, He would have mercy upon me, and I would love and serve Him always.” As Ellen was thus meditating someone asked her, “Do you wish to see Jesus?” She then had to climb a steep and apparently frail stairway with her eyes fixed upward until she reached the final step and stood before a door which her guide opened and bade her enter. “In a moment I stood before Jesus,” Ellen recalled. “I tried to shield myself from His gaze, feeling unable to endure His searching eyes, but He drew near with a smile, and,

¹⁷Ibid., 27, 28.

laying His hand upon my head, said: ‘Fear not.’” Jesus’ presence and smile filled her with “gladness,” “holy reverence and an inexpressible love.”¹⁸

Ellen left the way she had come with “a green cord coiled up closely,” handed her by her guide. He told her to place it next to her heart, and whenever she wanted to think of Jesus, she should take it out and “stretch it to the utmost.” She was reminded not to leave it coiled for any length of time, lest it become difficult to straighten again. “This dream gave me hope, Ellen said. “The green cord represented faith to my mind, and the beauty and simplicity of trusting in God began to dawn upon my soul.” This glimpse of hope gave her courage to confide all her sorrows and perplexities to her mother, who sent her to see Elder Levi Stockman, a young Methodist pastor who also believed the Millerite Adventist message. Upon hearing Ellen’s story, Stockman placed his hand affectionately upon her head, “saying with tears in his eyes: ‘Ellen, you are only a child. Yours is a most singular experience for one of your tender age. Jesus must be preparing you for some special work.’”¹⁹

After Stockman had spoken to at length about on the great love of Christ and the plan of redemption, he said to Ellen: “Go free, Ellen . . . return to your home trusting in Jesus, for He will not withhold His love from any true seeker.” He then “prayed earnestly” for her, and it seemed to her “that God would certainly regard the prayer of His saint” (Pastor Stockman), even if Ellen’s own “humble petitions were unheard.” She left the interview with Stockman “comforted and encouraged,” and declared that “During the few minutes in which I received instruction from Elder Stockman, I had obtained

¹⁸1T, 28, 29.

¹⁹Ibid., 28, 29; cf. *LS*, 157-159.

more knowledge on the subject of God's love and pitying tenderness than from all the sermons and exhortations to which I had ever listened.”²⁰

According to her grandson Arthur L. White, “This was a turning point in Ellen’s experience.”²¹ That evening she attended a prayer meeting and spoke her first prayer in public. After that prayer, her faith was fully restored. “My peace and happiness,” she said, were

in such marked contrast with my former gloom and anguish that it seemed to me as if I had been rescued from hell and transported to heaven. I could even praise God for the misfortune that had been the trial of my life, for it had been the means of fixing my thoughts upon eternity. Naturally proud and ambitious, I might not have been inclined to give my heart to Jesus had it not been for the sore affliction that had cut me off, in a manner, from the triumphs and vanities of the world.²²

Full of happiness, Ellen said the Scripture was continually in her mind: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.” She also reported: “My views of the Father were changed; I now looked upon Him as a kind and tender parent, rather than a stern tyrant compelling men to blind obedience.” Her heart went out toward God in such “deep and fervent love,” that “For six months not a shadow clouded my mind, nor did I neglect one known duty. My whole endeavor was to do the will of God, and keep Jesus and heaven continually in mind. I was surprised and enraptured with the clear views now presented to me of the atonement and the work of Christ.”²³ Her faith in Jesus was no longer coiled or crippled, but straight and strong.

²⁰ *IT*, 29-31.

²¹ Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Early Years* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1985), 39.

²² *IT*, 31.

²³ *Ibid.*; *LS*, 39.

Ellen G. Harmon and her family's "acceptance of Miller's teaching led to their being disfellowshipped from the Chestnut Street Methodist Church in 1843," together with many others who believed in the soon second coming of Jesus Christ.²⁴

Stockman had said to Ellen Harmon: "Jesus must be preparing you for some special work." She was now ready for the unexpected beginning of her life's work.²⁵

²⁴T. Housel Jemison, *A Prophet Among You* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1955), 205.

²⁵*IT*, 29. The narrative of her experience continues at the beginning of chapter 5.

APPENDIX F

FIRST TENT CAMP MEETING AT MOSS, NORWAY

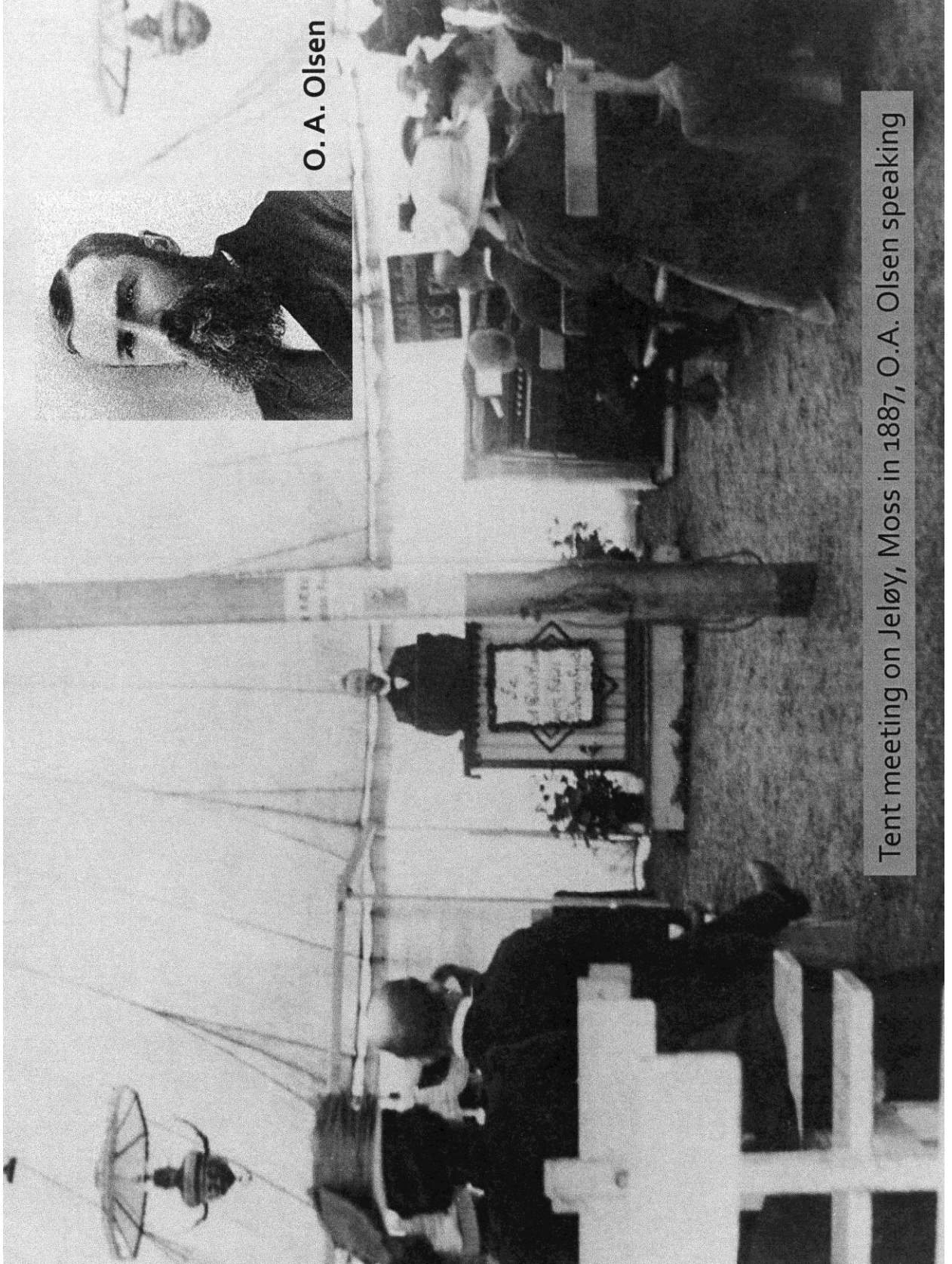
APPENDIX F

FIRST TENT CAMP MEETING AT MOSS, NORWAY

This appendix includes pictures from the first tent camp meeting at Moss, Norway, where the first Norwegian Conference was organized on June 10, 1887. Its first president was O. A. Olsen, a native son of Norway from Skogen, Songdalen Municipality, in south Norway. Jeløy is a small island just off the coast of Norway, near Moss.



Standing far from the left: E. G. Olsen. Sitting from the left O. A. Olsen and his wife Jennie. Sitting in the middle behind the boys, J. H. Waggoner. Sitting third from the right Ellen G. White, beside her to the right W. C. White and his wife Mary.



O. A. Olsen

Tent meeting on Jeløy, Moss in 1887, O.A. Olsen speaking

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